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ELLIOTT FLOWER { SEPT. 1911
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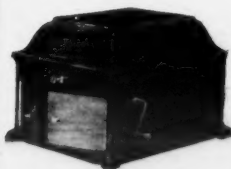
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VOL. XXVIII

CONTENTS

No. 2

FOR • SEPTEMBER • 1911

Cover Design	Henry Hutt	
Downstairs. Complete Novel	Henry C. Rowland	1
A Drinking Song. Poem	William Butler Yeats	48
Debtor to the Wise. Short Story	Margaretta Tuttle	49
From Out the Silence. Poem	Alice Corey	56
Sweets. Short Story	May Edginton	57
The Scratch. Short Story	Nalbro Bartley	67
The Present Need. Poem	Arthur Wallace Peach	71
Largely Jewelry. Short Story	Frank Condon	78
The Girl of the Charnalette. Short Story	Carrington Phelps	84
Kathleen, of Course. Short Story	William Slavens McNutt	93
The Cataclysm. Short Story	Louise Leonard	103
Set Fair. Poem	L. E. Johnston	113
Pat the Peaceful. Short Story	Elliott Flower	114
A Good Deed. Short Story	Jane W. Guthrie	120
The Great Argentina Bubble. Short Story	James Oliver Curwood	128
A Bit of Paint and Powder. Short Story	Leila Burton Wells	139
Gypsy Song. Poem	Berton Braley	147
Siren. Short Story	Owen Oliver	148
Myrtle. Poem	Clinton Scollard	155
For Book Lovers		156
Talks With Ainslee's Readers		159

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$1.80

SINGLE COPIES FIFTEEN CENTS

Monthly Publication issued by AINSLEE MAGAZINE Co., Seventh Avenue and Fifteenth Street, New York.
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 Entered September 11, 1902, at New York as Second-class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.
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VOL. XXVIII.

SEPTEMBER, 1911.

No. 2.

DOWNSTAIRS



BY
Henry C. Rowland

CHAPTER I.

MR. SAMUEL FELLOWES PAYNE, with mingled feelings of sadness and remorse, watched the departure of the steamer train from the St. Lazare station. As the end of the last car dwindled in a halo of smoke and steam, he sighed deeply, and turned away.

His parting with his fiancée had not been all that he could have wished. Because he could not see his way to leave his estate on the upper Seine and return with Aline and her mother at a three days' notice, she had bestowed upon him a farewell of which the frostiness was unseasonable upon a bright April morning.

"That's the American girl of it," snapped Payne to himself. "No European young woman would have the consummate cheek to insist that her fiancé drop everything and follow her, when she could have waited another week herself, just as well as not. There is only one thing the matter with Aline, and that is she's spoiled as iced Burgundy. A man living too long in Europe gets out of training for American

girls." He stared into the swimming void left by the train. "And for two sous," he added, "I'd go out and hop into the car, and beat that fool *rapide* to Cherbourg. It's only about three hundred and twenty-five kilometers over the road, and it takes that slug of an express six hours. If I couldn't tear it off in four, towns and all, I'd sell the car and buy a blind donkey to get about with. Hello, here's a chump missed his train."

For there had come a sort of whirlpool outside the door leading from the ticket office, whence there emerged a furious traveler followed by an overloaded porter.

Thought Payne: "In thinking of the misfortunes of others, we learn to forget our own," and drew near to enjoy the balm of bitter words which fell from the lips of the tardy one. It was a well-dressed man with a fluent command of speech, and Payne, accustomed to hearing only French, bathed in the warm flow of comment on the congested conditions of Paris streets and the absence of traffic order.

But this relaxation was but momentary. Another whirlpool at the gate, and here came hotfoot another victim,

this time a young girl with very bright hair, teeth, eyes, and cheeks. No luggage followed in her wake; only a taxi driver clamoring words to the effect that the laborer was worthy of his hire.

"It's gone!" she cried, and the accent of the last word was enough to label her as English.

Her predecessor turned to her with the informality which comes of a common disaster.

"Yes, it's gone," he snarled. "First time a French train was ever known to get away on time. Did you get caught in that jam, too?"

She nodded her bright head, and Payne saw that her blue eyes were rapidly filling.

Said the man: "I wouldn't miss that boat for five thousand dollars. I *can't* miss it. I've just *got* to be in New York this day week."

"And my companion and all of my luggage have gone," wailed the pretty one.

"Here," said Payne to himself, "is a direct interposition of Fate. It is my plain duty to succor beauty in distress and to go to the assistance of an American and a brother."

He was about to speak when the other man observed him.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but do you speak English?"

"Of a sort," Payne answered.

The other man glanced at the heavy ulster and motor goggles of the millionaire expatriate.

"We're in the deuce of a fix," he said. "Do you suppose it would be possible to buy a special?"

"No," answered Payne. "That's been tried before by people in your mess. It's against the rules of this silly line. There's only one chance of getting your boat, and that's to make the run to Cherbourg in a fast car." He was speaking to them both.

"But can that be done?"

"It *has* been done." He glanced at the girl who was staring at him with a Jeanne d'Arc expression. "Come on," he snapped. "I'll run you down myself. If anybody could do it, I can."

"But—but——"

"Butt out through that door," snapped Payne. "We've no time to argue if you want to catch your boat. There's always the chance of a blow-out. Permit me, madam."

He picked up a large bundle marked with the name of a celebrated modiste, and led the way to the door. The other man glanced at the girl.

"The 'god from the machine,'" he gaped. "Come on. This is too Heaven sent." And he motioned for her to precede him.

With dazed eyes and the step of a sleepwalker, the girl passed out of the station between the two men. Payne signaled, and there glided stealthily up to the curb a long, rakish *torpilleur* with a motor box like the boiler of a locomotive. Payne turned to his enervated guests.

"Don't look so worried," said he crisply. "You are in safe hands. I am Samuel Payne, of Chicago and Paris."

"Sam Payne!" echoed the other man, and then turned impressively to the girl. "I told you he was a god. We will get there or win our heavenly home. Mr. Payne is one of the pioneers of motoring. You will never die of hydrophobia in a country where he has lived a year, because there are no dogs."

"What are you talking about?" she asked bewilderedly.

"Don't mind him," said Payne, in his curt voice. "Put on this goat coat. It's cold on the road, if it is April. Also, you had better take off that inverted flowerpot, and wrap this scarf around your head, or the wind may blow off your hair. There are goggles in the pockets. There's a big ulster for you, Mr.——"

"Count's, of New York and Heaven."

"I am Miss Eykyn," said the girl, a little shyly.

Both men lifted their caps.

"Now," said Payne, "wedge yourselves in good and tight, or you might get spun out, and we don't want to have to stop on the road. There are rugs under your feet."

He settled himself behind the wheel, and his French mechanic slipped in beside him. Payne reached for the

lever, and flirted the monster out into the stream of traffic.

Coutts stole a look at the girl beside him.

"A top-notch," was his inward comment. "Didn't know they breed 'em so good to look at in perfidious Albion. Thought they were all beaky and flat. And just as good as she is pretty."

Aloud, he said:

"Do you like motoring, Miss Eykyn?"

She turned to him, pouting at her veil.

"I don't know. This is the first time that I have ever been in a motor car."

"Impossible! Have you lived in a convent?"

"Oh, no. In Dacre. Do you know where that is?" Her blue eyes were dancing, but demure.

"Alas, no. Our faulty American system of education."

"It's in Norfolk. Motors come through Dacre sometimes, but they never stop. Only the people who live there stop in Dacre, and they stop there always."

Coutts laughed.

"I'm very glad," he said, "that all of them don't."

The demure eyes were cast downward, yet Coutts, stealing another look at the pretty face, saw evidence that its "Oh-tell-me-gentle-stranger" look might be misleading.

"So you are going to America," he observed. "That is a far cry from Dacre, isn't it? I hope that you will like the little place and her busy peoples."

"I'm sure to," she answered, and added naively: "You are the first American to whom I ever spoke. I thought that you were English."

"Far from it. Three thousand miles from it."

"But you speak like an Englishman."

"Ah, I see you share in the prevailing European idea that Americans talk through their noses. Many talk through their mouths, sometimes too much, I'll admit." He leaned forward. "Payne, I insist on paying for all sheep and horned cattle, and on doing my share

toward the widows' and orphans' fund, but that chap who just missed his harp and halo would come high."

"I'm insured against 'em," came the snappy answer. "The street is no corral for mules."

"He goes through Paris as if he hated it," commented Coutts.

"I do," answered Payne. "You notice I'm leaving it about as fast as I can with safety."

It struck the other two that he was getting out of the gay capital a little faster than that. But it was not until St. Germain was passed and the big car settled down with a droning hum for its race to the eastward that they began to think seriously on Everlasting Life. Payne, although a scant six feet, appeared to have shrunk into his heavy ulster like a turtle into his shell, his head barely showing above the high collar, and all of him, so far as the other two could observe, as motionless as a sack of flour. The modern car with its long-stroke, large-valve motor made it seldom necessary for him to come down from his high gear, while the tremendous power drove them up the long grades with a speed equal to their descents.

After passing Evereux, they struck the big, straight road again, and soared away like a meteorite. Miss Eykyn found herself clinging with the grip of despair to the arm of her companion. Mr. Coutts did not protest.

Another dizzying stretch, and they slowed down for Caen. Here Payne stopped in the middle of the town to take fuel. He slipped out of the car and into the little shop, presently to emerge with the best half of a roast chicken, bread, cheese, a bottle of red wine, and two glasses.

"Eat, drink, and be merry, my children," said he, "for to-morrow we may be seasick. I know that I will."

"That you will," Coutts cried. "How is that?"

"I am going on that impatient packet with you," answered Payne, pouring a glass of wine for Miss Eykyn.

The two left-behinds stared first at each other, then at their host. A light

of understanding dawned in the face of Coutts.

"Upon my word," he gasped. "So that is the secret of our rescue."

Payne gave him a wintry smile.

"There was method in my madness," said he. "I was wishing myself aboard that ill-named *rapide* when I sighted you two. It needed but that to crystallize my decision."

"Won't she be surprised?" cried Coutts.

"But you've got no luggage," exclaimed Miss Eykyn, her blue eyes very bright.

Payne grinned.

"Coutts has," he answered, "and I noticed that we were about of a size." He glanced inquiringly at his guest. "No doubt you have bought some nice new clothes over here. Americans generally do."

"Eight suits," admitted Mr. Coutts, "including dinner suit and full dress. Also much lingerie."

"Good!" said Payne. "I can help you to get 'em through free of duty. Well, en route!"

He slipped into his place again. "Ugh! Ugh!" went the ill-sounding alarm, and the big car slipped through the town and out into the open country. To the English girl the remainder of the run was a chaotic incoherence of impressions both physical and mental. The inanimate figure ahead of her and the roaring fabric which he controlled seemed ridden by all the devils of furious speed.

Time and place lost all relation. Vaguely she felt that she was Prudence Eykyn, of Dacre, Norfolk, but with these two mad Americans nothing seemed to matter. When finally the big car slowed, then stopped, she felt that she would like to cry. It struck her as strange and unhallowed that these two men who had passed through the same terrific experience should be on the ground at her side, laughing, and chaffing, and telling the waiting porters to cheer up, that the train was coming, as they themselves had seen it leave the Gare St. Lazare.

Coutts started his usual banter, but

Payne's keen eyes with the heavy "bumps" over their outer corners rested upon her with a short, searching gaze, when he said:

"Don't get out for a minute. Stop where you are, and I'll send you a glass of port and a madeleine. It makes you feel a bit upset when you're not used to it. Keep still and rest. The train will not be here for another half hour. It's no wonder that you find yourself giddy after the shaking up I gave you. Come on, Coutts; I need a drink."

And the two went off, leaving her a very bewildered young lady from Dacre. But now one distinct impression had come to furnish her with something to fasten to. This was that Mr. Samuel Payne was really, as the exuberant Coutts had lightly said, some sort of a god.

CHAPTER II.

"This world," observed Mr. Coutts, as he settled comfortably into his steamer chair, "is very small. But I am glad of it, because it brings one into frequent contact with the nice people in it. To think that the 'merry widow,' as we used to call you in the Piedmont Hunt Club, should be the sedate companion of the pretty English rose who yesterday met with the two great experiences of her life—meeting an American and being driven by Sam Payne."

Lady Forrest rested a large heap of real chestnut hair against the back of her chair, and regarded him quizzically under her dark lashes.

"How did she strike you, Coutts?"

"Equal parts of saccharine and honey, with a dash of bitters. When she thanked Payne so prettily for bringing her down to Cherbourg, she entirely overlooked my efforts in keeping her in the car when we hit that military trench across the road. However, I am becoming accustomed to such neglect."

Lady Forrest slightly turned her head, and her clear, gray eyes rested thoughtfully upon the flippant person at her side.

"You are a pampered cub, Coutts,"

said she, and added reflectively: "I wonder how much real heart you have got underneath?"

"Try me."

She slightly raised her eyebrows.

"I believe I will."

"You have only to call my bluff to find out."

"Then I'll call. Really, you could help me a lot if you would."

Her serious tone impressed the lawyer, and he gave her a quick, curious glance. Lady Forrest was a pretty woman of the athletic, out-of-door English type. Coutts, a Virginian, had met her first at a house party in the Piedmont Valley. At this time she had been a dashing widow of perhaps thirty-four, and the two had enjoyed a spirited little flirtation duel which had resulted in a draw, neither of the contestants being injured. The pretty widow had been hugely entertained, and Coutts had added another human document to his already considerable knowledge of her sex.

Lady Forrest, when he had met her, had been the guest of an old friend who was the wife of an attaché of the British embassy. Coutts knew that she had been left penniless after the death of her husband, a hard-riding, hard-living Norfolk baronet, and it was the general opinion that the pretty widow would not have been averse to a second plunge into the mystic sea of matrimony. There had been no lack of opportunity, but for some reason she had escaped to England unattached, leaving several ardent swains to bay at the moon. What had been her subsequent fortune, he did not know, but rather fancied that life had not been for her "all beer and skittles."

But under his habitual frivolity, Coutts had a kind nature, and was loyal to his friends, so at this direct appeal he stood his ground like a little man.

"My dear Lady Forrest," said he, "you know quite well that you have only to command. If I can be of any service to you don't hesitate to call on me."

She dropped her hand impulsively on his sleeve.

"You're a good sort, Coutts," said she. "It isn't very much that I'm going to ask. Really, old chap, I'm in an awfully odd position. Perhaps I'd better tell you the whole story; you ought to have learned discretion by now."

"If I had not I would be a disgrace to my teaching of four years ago," he answered.

"Always the courtier. Well, then, I'll get on. It's about Prudence Eykyn."

"Dear little girl!"

"Don't interrupt. You must know, my dear boy, that after I got back to England I found myself on pretty short commons. Then an old friend, Sue Patteson, came to the rescue, and offered me a position at Fox Crossing as housekeeper. Sue is a semi-invalid, but manages to entertain a good deal, so I went there to run the show. Lady Patteson's husband, Sir Henry, is an awful old reprobate, but he's not a bad sort, and every season he manages to have a string of poor relations for a week or so apiece. That was where I met Prudence, who is some sort of cousin of Sir Henry's. Prudence is quite alone in the world, and lived in Dacre with an elderly aunt. They had about one hundred and fifty pounds a year, left by Prue's father, who was a vicar."

"My word! Can two women live on that?"

"Yes, in Dacre, and quite decently. England is full of places like Dacre. An old stone bridge, an inn with a cart in front of the door, a common with a donkey, a church, two or three shops, and a few little cottages nestling in vines, not a soul in sight. That is Dacre."

"What a jolly place to die in."

"Precisely. That's about all there is to do. It usually takes them anywhere from eighty to a hundred years. There are no men but the vicar, and I don't count vicars, and the local title. So you can judge of the splendid matrimonial opportunities afforded by Dacre, and thousands of English villages like it. What chance has a girl?"

"I'll kiss her this very day."

"Don't you dare. But, you see, our English girls are so sheeplike! Once

in a while, though, one finds a daring soul who declines to accept this drifting into a mellow spinsterhood. Prue is one of these. When her aunt died a year ago, and she found that she had the one hundred and fifty pounds a year to herself, Prue got to thinking. Her entire fortune amounted to about four thousand pounds. So what does Prue decide but to turn this into cash, and go out into the world."

"And find a husband? Bully for her!"

"That's rather a brutal way of putting it. Prue is a high-spirited girl, charming, pretty, and in a way accomplished. She is full-natured, and she wanted to live. She wants a husband, of course, if he is the right sort, and a home, and babies, and the few sweet, simple things that every woman is entitled to. She told me of her intention one day, and I took her in my arms and kissed her on both cheeks."

"I'd like to do the very same thing."

"Hush! I said to her: 'My dear, we will get you a husband, and a rich one at that, and we will get him in America.'"

Coutts stared at her speechlessly.

"Why not?" Lady Forrest demanded.

"Your American girls come over in swarms, and raid England, and grab all the titled men. It's about time we Englishwomen sent a visiting team to collar some of your rich ones."

Coutts slapped his thigh, and let out a roar that startled the circling gulls.

"Fine! Glorious! Good for you! And you want me to manage?"

"I want you to trot up some eligibles. Let me tell you that the man that gets Prue will get a prize. And I don't intend that Prue shall be wasted on the first trousered nincompoop that prances up, either. I know the ropes a bit over there. But I like America and Americans, and I believe them to be the coming people. You've got force over there."

Coutts' look of levity vanished, and he became thoughtful.

"So as I understand it," he said, "you are staking the whole thing on the one throw. By George, but I admire her

pluck! Four thousand pounds—that's twenty thousand dollars."

"There's less than that. Prue insisted on leaving an annuity for an old family servant. Then I took her to Paris, and got her fitted out. We have now about fifteen thousand dollars."

"How long do you think that you can run on that?"

"About a year, as I figure it. You see, Coutts, it's no part of my scheme to go from a Dacre in England to a Dacre in America. As soon as we get to New York, I shall take Prue to Washington, where I know some people. Then this summer we shall go from one resort to another—the White Mountains, Bar Harbor, some place on the sea. I want Prue to meet some nice girls of her own age."

Coutts pondered deeply.

"And when the money is gone, if Prue should happen to disdain our gilded youths?"

"Oh, after that the deluge!" Lady Forrest laughed. "We have considered that, of course. Prue is absolutely game. She says that she has scraped and stinted all of her life, and she means to have one good year, no matter what comes of it."

Lady Forrest glanced down the deck.

"Here comes Prue. Not a word, mind you. She would take my head off if she knew that I'd peached."

"Never fear. And I say, you can count on me to help. If we can't get the pretty thing safely moored in the arms of some good man before the year is up, I'll stake her myself for the next lap."

Fresh and demure in a smart walking dress of Scotch tweed, with a little hat to match, and carrying a fur-lined coat, Prudence came swinging down the deck, smiling as the slight heave of the swell caused her to lurch a little in her gait. Coutts' critical eye rested upon her with fastidious approval. He noted also the admiring looks which were turned to the girl from certain ones of their shipmates.

Prudence gave him a nod and a bright smile as he rose from his chair. At the same moment, Mr. Payne, fol-

lowed by a deck steward bearing an armful of chairs, rugs, and pillows, lurched from the cabin door, and swayed unsteadily in the middle of the deck. Payne's face was of a somewhat greenish pallor, the jauntily waxed tips of his thin mustache mocking the dejection of bearing and expression.

"Oh, Lor'!" he gasped. "I feel like a poisoned pup. Put 'em there," he snapped at the steward, "and quick!"

Coutts regarded him with anxious disapproval.

"Please remember," said he, "that you are in borrowed plumes."

"Don't worry. If the worst comes to the worst, I'll buy 'em of you."

He sank with a groan into the chair which the steward had arranged with the lightning dexterity which comes of long practice.

"You don't mean to say that you are ill?" said Lady Forrest, for the sea was like a lake.

"Do I impress you as bursting with health?" Payne retorted. "Barring the remorse, I feel like 'the morning after.' It makes me seasick to go across a bridge."

Prudence looked at him wonderingly. Considering the wild gyrations of the car on the run to Cherbourg, there seemed no excuse for this unmanly weakness.

"Nonsense!" said she briskly. "It's all your imagination. Get up out of that chair, and we'll take a brisk walk. You will forget all about it."

"Don't dare."

"Oh, fudge!" She held out her firm, little hand.

Payne groaned, then allowed his own to fall limply into it. A hearty tug brought him tottering to his feet. Prudence linked her arm in his, and rushed him off down the deck. Coutts looked at Lady Forrest, and smiled.

"He looks like a dog being dragged to his bath," he observed, and added: "I am inclined to place a large bet on your protégée's success."

The second round saw Payne's face visibly brightening. At the fourth it held a tinge of color. The fifth revealed him twisting the tip of his mus-

tache, while the sixth had freshened him to a mood fit for conversation. The seventh, however, brought complications. As the two came opposite their friends, there emerged from the door of the cabin a stylishly dressed girl, whose vivid coloring and pretty, pettish face suggested the cover page of a Christmas illustrated magazine. At the sight of Prudence and Payne charging down upon her, she drew herself up with an expression of surprised resentment.

"Well, you're a nice one," she exclaimed, in a very clear but rather toneless voice. "After sending me word that you meant to stay in your bunk." She gave Prudence a little nod, and added, not too cordially: "Good morning, Miss Eykyn."

"Good morning," answered Prudence. "May I turn the patient over to you, Miss Doremus?"

"Oh, dear, no. Pray continue the treatment since it seems to be doing him so much good. Fancy being ill such weather as this."

"Mr. Payne's not ill now," said Prudence, and walked to her chair.

"Don't let me stop," said Payne plaintively. "I'm in a critical condition."

"Yes," cried Coutts. "For Heaven's sake keep him going, Miss Doremus. He's got on my clothes."

Miss Doremus did not appear amused at this pleasantry. Nevertheless she hooked her arm into Payne's, and the two moved sedately down the deck. Prudence's blue eyes followed them with disapproval.

"That's no way to walk," said she.

"No," Coutts agreed. "The first thing you know he'll be turning green again." He looked curiously at Prudence. "How does Miss Doremus impress you?" he asked. "I am curious to know because you will see many like her. Too many," he added under his breath.

"She is very pretty," Prudence answered.

"And very clever," said Coutts. "She is the perfect type of the American society girl. Observe that tall, stunning

figure, broad shoulders, straight back, small waist and hips, and proud, aristocratic carriage. She is what we call an American queen, and her dominion is undisputed in our nominal republic. We have also a good many kings. But the queens are the actual rulers, because, you see, they boss the kings. Payne's father was a king of mines and railroads. Payne himself is what we call an expatriated American, and is regarded by the rest of us with cold contempt and disapproval. He might have been a king himself, but he chose to abdicate with about twenty millions of dollars. Now a queen is leading him back by the nose. No doubt she went over after a title, but, failing to find one at a bargain, may see fit to content herself with Payne."

Prudence looked at him with disapproval.

"You are not very nice," she said.

"The speaker of truth never is. Here they come again. Mark that regal stride, and Payne is getting green around the gills. Bet you what you like he flops into that chair on the next lap."

This prophecy was fulfilled. As the two came up the deck, Payne's step was vacillating. Opposite his chair he tottered, then sank weakly into it. Miss Doremus surveyed him with disgust.

"You are too absurd," said she.

"I'm worse than that," murmured the sufferer.

The girl's eyes went to Coutts, then rested for an instant on Prudence. If she had said what was in her mind, it could not have been more plainly expressed to the others. She wanted to walk, but she disliked leaving Payne in the clutches of another girl.

Lady Forrest, accomplished strategist, turned to Prudence.

"Shall we walk a little, my dear?" she asked.

As they started briskly down the deck, the Englishwoman remarked:

"That girl is the sort that comes over and bags our men. There are two methods with men, my dear; one is to treat 'em like dogs; the other to knuckle under. English girls are brought up to fag for the men, and the result is that,

when an American girl begins to snub 'em, the brutes rather fancy the change. Now watch; she'll be walking with Coutts directly."

"Poor Mr. Payne!" said Prue. "I do wish you could have seen the way he handled his motor. He must really be awfully in love to have dashed off as he did."

"Rubbish! He was homesick. There, what did I tell you?"

Miss Doremus, with the chattering Coutts, was approaching them as they turned. Many eyes turned to follow the tall, graceful American girl. Payne, muffled to the chin, stared at the sea with eyes as glassy as the bosom of that inspiring element. Lady Forrest looked at him, and laughed.

"Poor chap!" said she to Prudence. "Let's stop and cheer him up."

CHAPTER III.

"Do you know," said Payne, as usual snappily, "I really believe that you are the only friend I've got aboard this accursed ship?"

Prudence, her firm, round arm linked in his, slightly accelerated speed. The two were taking their matutinal walk, for, while no general engagement had ever been made, both were in the habit of breakfasting early and appearing on deck before their friends were out of bed. The weather had held fine and the sea smooth, and Payne was beginning to wonder if he were really going to perform the unlooked-for feat of crossing the Atlantic without active seasickness.

"Yes," he continued, "you are the only friend I've got aboard. Mrs. Doremus despises me because I am merely an American 'mister,' and my name has a sad sound instead of parading with outriders, a hyphen or two, and a rear guard. Lady Forrest has for me the proper contempt of an Englishwoman for a man who is not beefy and stolid, but a mass of nerves and crankisms. Coutts regards me askance lest I lean against some fresh paint, or in other ways sully his raiment. You are my only friend, and these early walks of

ours get me started right for the whole day. Fancy my getting more than half-way across unscathed. It makes me feel like an old sea dog; shiver me timbers, but it does, by Jove!"

"You left somebody from your list," said Prue, looking at the deck seams.

"Aline?" This pretty name was not dwelt upon with a lover's caressing tone. Rather, it was barked out in the accent of a lady's pampered Pomeranian. "She's the worst of the lot; upon my word, she is. I can't help it if I'm not a good sailor. I always hated the sea, and everything about it, and I'll make you a bet that after we are married the first thing she'll want will be a yacht."

"Did you ever take her for a fast run in your motor?"

"No. She doesn't like open cars," Payne sighed. "That means that after we're married I'll have to give up driving."

They paused by the rail. Prudence's blue eyes rested curiously on her companion. Payne was a type quite new to her, as for that matter were most types not to be found in Dacre. He was a man of a scant six feet, wiry of build, with a keen, nervous face already lined about the mouth and eyes, the eyes themselves of a cold, metallic blue, very piercing, clear, and with eyelids almost hidden under folds continuous with the fullness above. His mouth was firm, with straight, decisive lips and a lean, strong jaw. Payne's complexion was very clear, and his whole personality suggested exquisite finish. He wore a small mustache, the ends of which were waxed to fine points. The face as a whole was stern and alert, but showed at most times a sort of dry, mocking humor.

As he leaned on the rail looking at her with a slight flush in his clear, lean cheeks, Prudence was conscious of some subtle, inward emotion. It was nothing new. From the very first, his sharp, incisive voice, brisk and authoritative, his sudden, unexpected smile, half satirical, half kindly, had stirred certain deep-seated impulses which were new and strange to the English

girl. Flashes of thoughtful kindness on his part had almost startled her at times. When, on the second day out, he had quietly announced his engagement to Miss Doremus, Prudence had been the prey of a very savage little fury of resentment.

They resumed their walk. The day was foggy, for they were on the Grand Banks, and the deck underfoot was still slippery from its scrubbing. But they both, somehow, managed to keep their feet.

"You are really getting to be a very fair sailor," said Prudence. "There is quite a roll this morning."

"That's your doing—my improvement, I mean. I don't seem to feel the motion when I am with you. Perhaps I absorb some of your own high vitality."

"You have plenty of your own."

"Not at sea. Now, when Aline comes up, she will want me to read to her, and in ten minutes I'll be taking on the drab, elusive tint of the sea. Then she will walk with Coutts."

A little flame of anger blazed in the girl's blue eyes.

"If she affects you like that, why do you want to marry her?"

He glanced at her in surprise.

"My goodness, I don't count. Besides, I am in love with her."

"Oh," said Prudence shortly, "I forgot about that."

"If I were not," said Payne, "do you think that I would have dashed off with no preparation, and come aboard this beastly ship, and be wearing Coutts' clothes, and leave my château to the tender mercies of a gang of French servants? Perhaps I have not been very chivalrous in my way of referring to my fiancée. That is because I invariably put on a grouch when I go aboard ship, and wear it until I walk ashore. Miss Doremus is really a thousand times too good for me. She is really an uncommon girl, and I shall be tremendously proud of her. I wish you could see her ride, and swim, and golf, and play tennis. Has me beaten to a finish. And think what a superb chatelaine she is bound to make. Really,

I'm the luckiest dog alive. Just because I peeve, you mustn't think that I am not appreciative. I have really a beastly nature. But once I'm licked into shape, I hope to be a model husband."

"And attain the unattainable?"

"Who knows? Think of the glory of being the first American to succeed."

He gave one of the quick, startling smiles which so lighted his lean, handsome face.

"When do you expect to—to be married?" Prudence asked.

"In the autumn. Apparently it takes a long time to engineer a wedding, and, besides, Aline wants to be free for the summer gayeties."

Coutts at this moment appearing, the conversation was interrupted.

"Change the watch," said that young man. "Miss Doremus is organizing to come on deck. You had better go, and carry up her book."

He possessed himself of Prudence, and led her down the deck. Coutts was, in fact, getting the Prudence habit. Others were conscious of this, none, however, more so than Coutts. Lady Forrest had observed it, and smiled quietly to herself. The only one who was quite unaware of any marked attention was Prudence herself, this because she was a very unsophisticated English girl, unused to attentions from men, and with her pretty head and virginal heart crowded to bursting with one Samuel Payne.

But Mr. Coutts himself had done some heavy thinking. Beneath his frivolous armor, this observing man had a vast amount of sound sense. Otherwise he would scarcely have been at thirty-seven years of age the head of an important New York law firm. Coutts' father was rich, and he himself in command of a good income. He was deeply interested in his profession, and devoted every scrap of his time to promoting his legal interests, but he had a strong domestic sense, and had begun to realize that he wanted a hearthstone of his own. Club life was beginning to bore him, and he had thought seriously and sensibly of marriage.

But the trouble had been the choice

of a mate, and Coutts knew that he would never be satisfied or happy with anything less than a wife who should be a mate in all that the word implied.

Prudence, he believed, was this mate. When Lady Forrest had confided in him about the girl, Coutts had been first amused, then interested, then touched, and, last of all, filled with admiration. Later he had come to believe that there existed between Prudence and himself that strongest of all ties, a common want. They both wanted a home and the fullness of life. His interest in the girl, at first impersonal and friendly, had rapidly mellowed to a warmer sentiment. Prudence's physical attractiveness was probably the last consideration, but it promised to clinch the nail of his regard.

It was the last night out, and a glorious one, whereof the principal decorative feature was the moon, when Coutts, walking the deck with Prudence, came to a sudden resolution, and then and there took his fate in his hands.

"Now, listen, Prudence," he said slowly. "I know your whole story. Lady Forrest told me. That was the first morning out, and since then I have come to know you, and to learn for myself your sweet, high-spirited nature. More than that, I have learned to love you very dearly, and to want you for my wife. Will you marry me, Prudence, and make me the happiest man in the world? Underneath all my flippancy, I am a serious sort of person, and I am sure that we would be very happy. At any rate, will you consider it, Prudence, dear?"

Prudence seemed to be fighting for her breath.

"But Lady Forrest should not have told you," she cried.

"It would have made no difference. Of course you don't love me now. Why should you? But I am sure we would both be very, very happy. I'm nothing wonderful, but I'm not a bad sort—and you don't love anybody else."

A sudden movement of Prudence brought him to a stop.

"But you don't, do you?" he asked.

Her head fell. Coutts, amazed at this unlooked-for complication, stared at her dumbly.

"Prudence," he gasped, then lowered his voice, "have you gone and lost your heart to Sam Payne?"

Still no answer. Coutts' grip on her hand tightened.

"Have you?" he repeated.

Prudence choked back a sob.

"I don't know," she answered, "but—but it all seems so different now. I—I don't think that I—could marry any man unless—I loved him very, very much. Oh, Mr. Coutts, I—I think I'm going to cry."

Coutts drew her down beside him so that they sat on a chest of boat supplies.

"But, my dear girl, Payne's engaged to be married."

"I—I know it. It's not that. Only ——" She choked.

"Only now that you see what it is like to be in love, you can't think of marrying without that. I quite understand, my dear."

Prudence covered her face with her hands.

"I don't know what is to become of me," she said. "It seemed easy enough before."

"But quite impossible now." Coutts took her hand in his. "Will you let me advise you, dear?"

"Yes, of course I will. Don't you hate me?"

"No. Quite the reverse. Poor little girl! Now, what you must do is this: You can't have Payne, and you don't want anybody else. Go ahead, then, and have your little fling. Perhaps you may feel differently about it after a while. But remember, Prudence, you have got one good American friend, at least."

Prudence squeezed his hand in a silence broken only by the distant throb of the engines.

CHAPTER IV.

"Dash it all, Coutts," said Lady Forrest, as he tucked her into her steamer chair the following morning; "the fat's in the fire. Prudence has gone and

made a silly mess of the whole business."

"She has made a silly mess of me," answered Coutts sadly. "I have just received the jolt of my life. Here was I stepping out of my chariot to play Prince Charming, only to be turned down. Fancy her getting a mash on Sammy Payne. And he unhappily engaged."

Lady Forrest knit her handsome brows.

"It's rather more than a mash, old boy," she said. "I'm horribly afraid it was a case of love at first sight. That race to Cherbourg did Prue's business."

"I should have thought," said Coutts, "that Aline Doremus might have undone it, then. It's too absurd. Don't you think that she'll come to her senses after she gets ashore?"

The Englishwoman shook her head.

"She's quite in her senses now, so far as Mr. Payne is concerned. The difficulty lies here; as long as Prudence was heart free, she was quite ready to make any suitable match which might have been offered, but now that her heart has been captured, she absolutely declines to consider marriage at all."

"Yes, yes," sighed Coutts, "that's the woman of it. And Payne has been unconsciously fermenting the sweet poison all the way across. Why the deuce couldn't he have been sick in his bunk, as usual? He has also kneed two pairs of my best trousers all out of shape."

"Oh, gammon! What I want to know is, what's to be done. There's no sense in our going ahead and spending all of Prue's little fortune in husband hunting when she balks dead at marrying the most eligible bachelor on my list; namely, your fascinating self."

"So I was on your list?"

"Of course you were. You see"—Lady Forrest raised her eyebrows—"I had reason to know of your weakness for us English."

"Shame on you! Sentiment should have forbid."

"It was a wrench. What is bothering me now is the course to be taken. When Prudence told me that she had declined your proposal, I begged, argued, wept,

and prayed. I kept at her all night long, but the proverbial mule was a slave of the lamp compared to her. The worst of it is that time will not change her. It is not Payne; it is the taste of that form of insanity known as love. 'But, my dear,' I said, 'you have not come over here to fall in love; you have come to get married.' She did not even weep. She merely answered: 'I know it. But everything is changed now. I shall never marry.' And she means it, too, confound her!"

Coutts inhaled slowly his cigarette. "In that case," said he, "as you say, it would be foolish to let her go ahead and spend all of her money."

"Naturally. There is nothing left but for us to find some sort of employment. Prue absolutely refuses to return to England, nor am I very keen about it myself. Don't you think that you could find something for us to do? My idea is that if Prue were to work for her living for a while, she might come to her senses, and get a different idea on the marriage proposition."

Coutts looked doubtful.

"But what could she do?" he asked.

"She might fill a position as governess. Prue was educated at a very good school at Margate, and has a smattering of French, and German, and music."

Coutts blew a cloud of smoke into the air.

"And you?" he asked.

"I might get a position as housekeeper."

"Rather a come-down, isn't it, for the widow of Sir Harry Forrest, M. F.?"

"Not a bit. I was housekeeper for Sue Patteson. And between you and me, I'd a lot rather be with strangers than friends. To be quite frank, I was anxious to get out because that old reprobate, Sir Henry, was taking it into his head to maul me about."

Coutts laughed.

"You see," went on Lady Forrest, "if we could find employment at once, you might take the three thousand and odd pounds left of Prue's inheritance, and invest it. Then she'd have something put aside for a rainy day."

Coutts nodded.

"That's not a bad idea," he said. "If the opportunity arose, I might even turn it so as to get her a little income to live on."

In this highly sensible way were matters therefore arranged. To be quite frank, Mr. Coutts was not altogether sorry. Freed from the demoralizing influences of moon and close propinquity, much of his deeply rooted cynicism in regard to womankind began to reassert itself.

A week of active business with the handling of an important case quite restored the lawyer from his attack of "sea love," and he found himself wondering how he had managed to become infected. Lady Forrest and her protégée had gone to Washington, and afterward to Lakewood, and in the meantime, Coutts, true to his promise, was making inquiries which might result in some desirable form of employment for both.

One morning, in opening his mail, he came upon a letter which annoyed him. This was a communication from a very important Chicago client named Steers. Mr. Steers was a man of lowly origin who had amassed a fortune of two or more millions in promoting various industrial enterprises. At present he was largely interested in a gas-producer engine for the consumption of lignite, a company for the manufacture of an excellent infant's food, and a harmless beverage which should be a substitute for tea.

Mr. Steers was a widower of about fifty-two, whose immediate family consisted of two very pretty daughters—*Sylvia*, aged twenty-two, and *Pauline*, aged eighteen. Neither father nor daughters had enjoyed many opportunities for culture, Mr. Steers' fortune having been acquired in a few recent years. Although strongly desirous of social distinction, the Steers family was somewhat handicapped by an unfortunate employment of the English language, a startling taste in clothes, and a lack of the proper sort of acquaintance. A family council sit-

ting on the subject of how best to attain that rarefied social atmosphere to which the possession of large wealth should entitle any honest citizen had resulted in a decision to take the initial step by a residence in New York City and a country place near Boston.

Mr. Coutts had done a large amount of legal work for Mr. Steers, and the big case which he had hurried home from Europe to conduct was pertaining to certain infringements which threatened the promoting of the gas-producing engine. Before going abroad, he had secured for Mr. Steers his properties in New York and Massachusetts, the latter a fine country house with spacious grounds near Manchester.

The communication now in hand from Mr. Steers was to announce his intention of occupying this residence during the summer, and to request that Mr. Coutts interest himself in the securing of a full corps of servants for the house, grounds, and garage.

Mr. Steers wrote:

We want a full outfit. I plan to fire the whole gang of holdups that have been getting fat off me here, and take on a new bunch. My cussed butler doesn't do a thing but guzzle my best wines, which I might put up with if he didn't get loaded. My housekeeper knocks down fares, and I caught her joy-riding with the chauffeur when I needed the car bad. The servant girls sass me to my face, or else make goo-goo eyes. What I want is a sensible woman to run the house, that ain't too proud to eat downstairs, a butler that won't graft over fifty per cent., a lady's maid who don't give herself airs and is willing to work two hours out of twenty-four, and a chauffeur who won't put cracked glass in the tires, and sell important pieces of the car to the junk shops. I'm ashamed to say what it's cost me to run my house for the last year, but even if I don't know the ropes like some people I am no sucker. Other folks seem to get on with their hired help, and I don't see why I can't make out if I get the right sort. Yours truly, WM. P. STEERS.

P. S.—I congratulate you on the way you have handled that gas-burner engine case. Looks like they hadn't a show in.

P. P. S.—The girls would like an English maid who would be a sort of companion, and put them right on this and that. Get a good-looker if possible. I don't like hatchet faces around the house. Money no object if the help is the right sort.

W. P. S.

Coutts flung the letter down on his desk.

"Damn his cheek!" said he. "Does the yap think I run an intelligence office?"

He was glowering at the letter in a most unamiable state of mind when the doorboy brought a card, and laid it on his desk. The name was that of Mr. Cornelius C. D. Stuyvesant, a clubmate and client of Coutts.

"Show Mr. Stuyvesant in," snapped the lawyer.

The caller was, despite his aristocratic name, a rather heavy-looking young man of perhaps thirty-four or five, slightly inclined to corpulence, and wearing a brown Vandyke beard and long hair of artistic suggestion. He was exquisitely dressed, and his face, though not of a predominating intelligence, was attractive from its expression of easy-going good nature. His high color and rather pudgy hands suggested one fond of the fleshpots, but as an epicure rather than a glutton. His eyes were inoffensive, and of a diluted blue.

With a brief "Hello, Coutts," he selected the largest and most comfortable chair, then took a cigar from a gold case marked with his coat of arms. Coutts leaned back, and surveyed him under thoughtful and somewhat troubled brows.

"Well, Mr. Stuyvesant," said he, "it's all finished. The court has settled the bankruptcy claims, as I wrote you, and the creditors will have to like it or lump it, as they see fit."

"Greedy beggars! Serves 'em jolly well right after the way they've been raggin' me," replied Mr. Stuyvesant, in the very best English accent to be learned out of England.

"It's a shame," said Coutts, "a beastly shame! I feel more sorry for you than I can say. If you had only come to me four years ago, when you began to have your first suspicions, I could at least have saved you the Twenty-second Street property, and that would have been enough for you to live on. But that's just the way with you confounded artists."

Mr. Stuyvesant gave a philosophic shrug.

"Of course I was a silly ass," said he, "but I really hadn't the heart to impeach such a respectable old hypocrite as Livingstone Van Schaick Doremus. Besides, he was my cousin, and what would I have said if I'd been wrong?"

"The question now is," said Coutts, "what are you going to do? Mr. Doremus is dead, after embezzling your entire fortune, and kindly paying you your income out of what was left of the capital. The property of Mrs. Doremus and her daughter is their own, and can't be attached in any way for his liabilities. Mrs. Doremus even declines to settle her deceased husband's personal obligations. As for doing anything for yourself, she refuses to so much as hear your name spoken. She intimates that, if you were ill-advised enough to give her late husband power of attorney and carte blanche over the control of everything you possessed, it serves you right for putting temptation in his path."

"Really, old chap, I'm inclined to agree with her," Stuyvesant observed.

"Just the same," said Coutts, "it's a bit rough on you. How do you expect to live? Have you any other resources?"

"Nary one. I never sold a picture in my life, and my friends scud away when they see me coming. Also, the bankruptcy court is injurious to credit."

"Then what do you propose to do?"

Again Mr. Stuyvesant shrugged.

"I'm dashed if I know," he answered. "That's what I came down to bother you about. I cannot dig, and to beg I would not be ashamed if I thought it would prove lucrative. But I've tried and failed."

"What are you living on now?"

"My chauffeur."

"Your what?"

"My chauffeur. He's an Italian nobleman—a real one. He might not like to have me mention his name, but his cousin is all that stands between him and one of the oldest titles in Italy. Got estates, too, but no money. About three years ago I picked up Alessandro starv-

ing in the street. First, I painted him; then, finding him a good sort, I took him on as chauffeur. Sent him to my garage to learn his job. He's been with me ever since. More of a friend than a hireling. Fact is, he's the only friend I've got left, barring only yourself. When the sheriff started in to seize everything, I sold the car to Alessandro 'for one dollar and other valuable considerations,' as you lawyers say. He's been doing taxi work, and every day he divvies up with me. But it can't last much longer as the car's about ready for the scrap heap. If Alessandro wasn't such a wizard of a mechanician, it would have dropped to pieces long ago."

Coutts' face softened.

"Case of 'bread on the waters,'" he remarked.

"Jus' so. But then, you see, Alessandro is really a swell. He's absolutely square, and a fine chap in all ways. Then he's a fine-looking fellow, and cheerful, and everybody likes him. I say, if you hear of anybody who wants a rattling good chauffeur, I wish you'd let me know."

"I certainly shall. But about yourself?"

Mr. Stuyvesant sighed.

"I thought of jumping into the river," said he, "but the water was so beastly dirty. There's really not a thing that I can do. If I were like some chaps that have come a cropper, I'd go out West or get a job as a clerk." He gave the English pronunciation to this last word. "But I hate roughing it, and I have to add change on my fingers. Consequently I don't add it at all."

Coutts leaned back in his chair, and stared at his client through narrowed lids. He noted with a lawyer's acumen the somewhat flaccid features, amiable expression, weak jaw, and general air of indulgent living.

"You've got to do something, you know," said Coutts.

"I know it, but what the deuce am I to do? If I could write a decent letter, I might get a job as somebody's private secretary. I don't care anything

about the stipend. After a chap's been living at the rate of twenty thousand dollars a year, it doesn't matter a great deal whether he gets fifty dollars a month or one hundred and fifty. But I *would* like a billet where I'd be sure of decent food and lodging."

"Look here," said Coutts briskly; "would you be too proud to take a situation as butler in a nouveau riche family?"

Stuyvesant stared. His jaw dropped, and he raised a rather pudgy hand to stroke his beard.

"'Pon my word. Butler? I say, are you chaffing me?"

"Not one bit. You've got to earn your living, and from what you have told me I'm inclined to think that, barring the social objections, the position of butler would suit you to the ground. You would get the best of food and clean, comfortable quarters. Shave your face, leaving only sideboards, and cut your hair, and your own brother wouldn't know you. Call yourself 'Dobbs' or 'Diggs' or any other old stage-butler name. If you will take it, I know of just the place for you. Listen to this."

Slowly and distinctly he read to his astonished client the letter from Mr. Steers, of Chicago. Nearing its completion, he was conscious that Mr. Stuyvesant was squirming in his chair and making agonized efforts to control his mirth. But at the final postscript the artist burst into a roar of laughter which only extreme weakness was finally sufficient to check.

"Upon my word!" gasped Stuyvesant, as soon as he was able to speak. "The very thing." He wiped his eyes on a scented and embroidered handkerchief. "Cornelius Dobbs, butler. That is me."

Coutts surveyed him with a grin.

"But, mind you," he said, "this is quite serious. You've really got to make good, you know."

"Make good?" gurgled Stuyvesant. "Well, rather! Between you and me and the lamp-post, old chap, I have always thought that if ever I went a cropper it would be to turn butler.

Don't worry. I will be a treasure. Really, dear boy, it's the only possible thing I'm fitted for." And he went off into another convulsion.

Coutts eyed him rather doubtfully. For the lawyer the business had its serious side.

"Your ill-timed levity fills me with misgivings," he remarked. "You see, Stuyvesant, it's not altogether a joke. This man Steers is an important client of mine, and, if he thought that I were trying to put up a job on him, it might cost me a legal business worth a good many thousands a year."

With some effort, Stuyvesant pulled himself together.

"Don't worry, dear boy," said he. "And, I say, don't begrudge me one good laugh. It's weeks and weeks since I've had one. I shall be a pearl among butlers. I always rather envied the smug rascals. This unseemly mirth springs from pure lightness of heart and the relief that comes of finding your proper level. And, look here. Why shouldn't Alessandro have the chauffeur's billet?"

"Of course he shall," said Coutts. "I thought of that the minute you told me about him. Then that's all settled. Come and dine with me at eight at the Union Club, and we'll talk it over. And now you'll have to excuse me, as I'm up to my ears."

On the departure of his client, Coutts sat for several moments deep in thought. Once or twice he smiled to himself. Then, having summoned his confidential stenographer, a sensible and discreet young person, he dictated the following letter to Lady Forrest:

"MY DEAR LADY FORREST: After considerable inquiry I have fallen quite by chance upon the very situations which you asked my aid in procuring. A wealthy client of mine from Chicago has decided to remove his residence to the East, and has accordingly purchased a house on upper Fifth Avenue and a most attractive country place near Manchester, in Massachusetts. My client has asked me to engage an entire household personnel, as he wishes to occupy his new country residence this summer.

"I have been so fortunate as to secure the services of a very desirable butler and chauffeur. My client, Mr. Steers, wishes me to

secure him a competent housekeeper and a young woman, preferably English, who may serve either as lady's maid or companion to his two daughters, Miss Sylvia, age twenty-two, and Miss Pauline, age eighteen. These three individuals comprise the immediate family.

"I have had the pleasure of being a guest at Mr. Steers' home in Chicago. Mr. Steers is a type of the Western American self-made man, and has risen from the ranks of miner and prospector to that of wealthy promoter of large fortune. The daughters, who impressed me as most attractive, have had scarcely any advantages, the wealth of their father having come within the last few years. They impressed me as simple, kindly people, rich in human nature, and of excellent principles.

"The position of housekeeper would, I think, be most desirable. As for the other position, that of companion, I think that it would be far preferable for Miss E. than that of nursery governess. Even better, it seems to me, barring the social aspect, would be the position of lady's maid, as this would entail no social obligations. Moreover, it is understood that the housekeeper is to have her own table, which will consist of the upper servants—namely, housekeeper, butler, lady's maid, and chauffeur.

"I can assure you that these positions are quite exceptional. Mr. Steers has been badly treated by his household corps, and will appreciate good and honest service. It would be a good thing, I think, for Miss E. to consider the matter seriously, as the longer she remains unemployed the more she is consuming her slim capital. Also, it is possible that active employment may restore her to her former sensible point of view.

"Please let me hear from you in regard to the matter at your very earliest convenience.

"Faithfully yours."

CHAPTER V.

It was less with the desire to please the client than to satisfy his own curiosity that Mr. Coutts decided, about a month later, to run down to Manchester for the official opening of the country house. Moreover, he wished to assure himself that all things were working together for good.

"With a titled Englishwoman as housekeeper," said Coutts to himself, "a New York swell and dilettante artist as butler, an Italian nobleman as chauffeur, a sweet English ingénue as lady's maid, it will be interesting and piquant to watch the actions and reactions when the Steers arrive. But more amusing still should be the first meal at

the housekeeper's table. It is a pity that my superior social position prevents my assisting at that."

For the cream of the situation lay in the fact that each of the upper servants would be anxious to preserve an incognito which might deceive the others. Moreover, all were actuated by the same motive—cold necessity. It was not as though they had assumed their duties as a mere transient masquerade. Coutts doubted that Stuyvesant would ever again be aught but a butler. The artist seemed a man utterly without ambition, and, since he could no longer live in luxury, was quite content with a living which should secure him comfortable quarters and his three good meals a day.

"My only regret," thought Coutts, as he boarded a Sunday train, for the Steers were to arrive the following day, "is that I could not have managed to secure a retired admiral in straightened circumstances as captain of the yacht, a Life Guardsman to run the stables, and a German baron to make the garden."

He had sent a wire to "Mrs." Forrest, announcing his proposed visit, and on arriving at Manchester was met on the platform by a smart-looking manservant in livery.

The motor—a new car selected by Coutts with the assistance of Alessandro—was drawn up at the steps. The chauffeur, a strikingly handsome, high-bred-appearing young man, touched his cap, then stepped forward to start the engine as the footman opened the door for Coutts. A moment later they were whirling off up the perfect road.

The Steers place was a fine old estate on Massachusetts Bay, comprising in all about twenty acres. The house, one of the older residences of the district, was of the colonial style of architecture, but had been thoroughly done over and modernized within by a late tenant. It was ample of space, dignified in appearance, and thoroughly comfortable throughout. At some distance to the side and rear were the stables and garage, the latter alone functioning at

present, Mr. Steers being an authority on cattle and preferring to attend to this part of the establishment himself. From the stables the ground fell away under a grove of magnificent old trees to the shore, which was picturesquely rocky with a bathing beach and boat-house.

As the motor drew up under the porte-cochère, Mrs. Forrest, in a becoming dress of dark cloth with a bunch of keys at her girdle, appeared in the open doorway. Coutts stepped out of the motor, and raised his hat.

"How do you do, Mrs. Forrest?" said he.

If he had looked for any expression of amusement or mutual understanding, he would have been disappointed. As a matter of fact, he would have been displeased had it existed. But in a quietly dignified and respectful manner, she made him welcome, then showed him to the room allotted him, whither the footman had already preceded them with the luggage. Coutts tossed him his keys, and the man opened valise and dressing case, and quickly and deftly laid out his things.

"Anything you would like, sir?" he asked.

"No, thanks. That is all," answered Coutts crisply.

The man withdrew, and Coutts turned to Mrs. Forrest.

"Well?" he asked inquiringly.

"Everything is ready for the family," she answered in a businesslike way. "This is a charming place. And, really, I must congratulate you on your selection of a household corps. Our meals downstairs are intellectual feasts. Prudence and I feel shockingly common. Dobbs and Alessandro discuss Pre-Raphaelite periods—often in Italian. Dobbs tells me he was for some years with an American artist in Florence."

"Yes, that is quite true." It was, Mr. Stuyvesant having been with himself during this epoch of his idleness. "How does Prudence like it?"

"She will tell you for herself." Mrs. Forrest stepped to the door. "Prudence!" she called.

Prudence arrived at the call. Coutts recognized her light step in the hall, and turned to see a charming picture framed in the old-fashioned, low-linteled doorway.

Prudence wore a simple muslin dress with a dainty, lace-trimmed apron of dotted Swiss. Her abundant golden hair was snugly coiffed in a fashion which Coutts had never seen her wear it before, and which accentuated her demure prettiness. With her bare, round forearms, little apron, short skirt just above her dainty ankles, and little shoes with rather high heels and neat bows, and, above all, the clear, pure English complexion, she reminded Coutts of an exquisite Greuze.

Prudence appeared a little embarrassed as she stood waiting to be addressed. But Coutts' manner quickly restored her poise. He had fully decided upon his attitude toward the household personnel which he had secured for his client. Whatever position these people might have occupied before, they were now in service, and Coutts detested the mixing of relations. Although a few weeks before he might have asked this pretty girl to marry him, she was now a lady's maid, and he would treat her as such.

"How do you do, Prudence?" said he kindly.

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Coutts," answered Prudence evenly.

Coutts gave her a penetrating look. She was prettier than ever, he thought, but it struck him that her expression, while not precisely discontented, was yet lacking in the cheerfulness which he would have liked to see it wear.

"How do you like it here?" he asked. "Are you happy?"

"It is a lovely place," she answered evasively, "more like England than anything that I have seen so far."

"Then you like it?"

"I think it very beautiful," she replied, dropping her blue eyes.

"That is not answering my question," said Coutts. "Are you satisfied with your position, up to this point?"

"I think," she answered slowly, "that I would have preferred to be a gov-

erness. But since Lady Forrest and you decide that this is preferable, I will try to do my best."

Coutts nodded. "If at any time you wish to leave," said he, "just let me know. That is all, Prudence."

The color flamed into her face, and her blue eyes opened very wide. She turned quickly, and went out.

Coutts found the situation suddenly deprived of its sense of humor. This was, however, in some measure restored by the advent of Mr. Dobbs, alias Cornelius C. D. Stuyvesant, Esquire, of New York and Florence. With his long hair closely and neatly trimmed, smug "sideboards" in the place of his artistic Vandyke, a sober, black tail coat, white tie, and piqué waistcoat, Dobbs was, to all outward appearance, the perfect butler.

Coutts surveyed him, fighting hard for the mastery of his grin. Dobbs, for his part, appeared perfectly at ease. The pinched, worried look had left his rather heavy face, which had resumed the pink, comfortable expression habitual to it before the coming of his financial cares.

"Upon my word," said Coutts, "you look satisfied."

Dobbs smiled.

"Satisfied is scarcely the word, dear b—— H'm! Excuse me, Mr. Coutts. My soul is brimming over with a deep content. To tell the honest truth, old ch—h'm, Mr. Coutts, I am almost tempted to believe that the métier of butler was that to which the hand of Fate had fashioned me. The only care I have left is that I may perform my functions in a manner which may find favor in the eyes of my master."

"And the others—your—your fellow servants?"

Dobbs smiled, then gently stroked the air an inch or two beneath his chin. He favored Coutts with a look dangerously full of intelligence.

"Mrs. Forrest is of course a lady. Look here—h'm, excuse me, sir—but what sort of a game are you putting up on this brone—h'm, Mr. Steers?"

"Game?" Coutts snapped. "There is

no game about it. I'm simply trying to get good service for my client."

"Excuse me."

"That's all right. And how does Alessandro like his place?"

"He is charmed. Says it reminds him of a French château where he once visited. He has made friends with the gardener, an Irish coreligionist, and is showing him how to lay out an Italian sunk garden. We are really a very happy family. The only one who appears a little out of her element is the lady's maid, Prudence. She is an unsophisticated English girl, and I suspect her of being unhappily in love. Alessandro threw her a few languishing glances, but they came back like the reflection of the summer sun on arctic ice."

"Do you ever have any qualms about the social *descensus Averni*?" Coutts asked curiously.

Dobbs colored, then laughed.

"That is all rot," said he. "A gentleman is always a gentleman, as long as he behaves like one. When I was in receipt of my rents, I did lots of things that I am a lot more ashamed of than anything I might ever do here. If a man has got to work for his living, what earthly difference does it make whether he digs another man's ditch or adds up his income or hands him his food, so long as he does it with credit and dignity? I tell you, Coutts, in this day and age and country, the busted swell ranks somewhere in the hobo class; a little below it, in fact, if his coat is not paid for. And so far as my particular job is concerned, a butler has a lot more dignity and independence than a clerk. I'm not ashamed of my job, by long odds. If Mr. Steers ever sees fit to give a banquet, he'll find things done as they should be. You might not believe it, old fel—h'm, Mr. Coutts, but I actually take a bit of pride in my work. I'm a butler, and I mean to be a good one, and I'm jolly proud of it. I'd rather be a good butler than a bum artist any day."

"I'd like to shake hands with you," said Coutts. "You are a little more than a butler; you are a philosopher."

"Thanks, old chap. Is there anything now that you would like?"

"A whisky and soda."

"Very good. I'll send it up. Thank you, sir."

And Dobbs modestly withdrew.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. William P. Steers and his two blooming daughters descended from the train at Manchester to be met by Mr. Coutts.

Mr. Steers was a tall, muscular man, with a deep-lined face, a square jaw, and a black mustache with an upward twist. His features were fierce and aquiline, their severity modified by a pair of very clear blue eyes, penetrating in quality, but with the suggestion of a humorous twinkle. His thin hair was brushed back from a high forehead, and clustered in short curls behind his ears. He wore a black cheviot cutaway suit, a black felt hat, rather broad of brim, and very shiny shoes of the fashion known as "Congress."

Miss Sylvia, the elder daughter, plainly inherited from her father in personal type. She was a tall girl of a bold, handsome type with blue eyes, coal-black hair, high coloring, and a strong, lithe, well-rounded figure. Her sister, Pauline, although but eighteen years of age, was already a large woman, and of strikingly different type from father and sister, her somewhat abundant charms being the legacy of her mother, who had been the daughter of a Swedish colonizer of the Middle West. Pauline's eyes were also blue, but of a lighter and more limpid quality; her hair was the color of yellow corn, and, although small of waist and tapering of limb, she already weighed in the neighborhood of one hundred and fifty-five pounds. The two girls were an imposing couple, each admirably contrasting the charms of the other, the somewhat striking effect produced rather heightened by the richness of their costumes and a leaning toward pearls of undoubted price.

As Mr. Steers' keen glance fell upon Coutts, his hard face lightened.

"Well, well," said he, in a very bass, but not unpleasing voice, which carried a slight drawl of the Southwest. "This is mighty good of you, Mr. Coutts." He turned to his daughters. "Girls, here's Mr. Coutts come up to help us break ground."

Coutts shook hands all around.

"I wanted to be the first to welcome you," said he, "and to assure myself that everything was in good running order."

Coutts led the way to the car, where there were fresh exclamations of pleasure.

"This is Alessandro, the chauffeur," said Coutts.

"How-de-do—how-de-do," said Mr. Steers affably, while the eyes of the two girls rested in admiring approval upon the handsome, smartly uniformed young Italian.

Alessandro saluted with his flashing and extremely pleasing smile, then stepped to open the door of the tonneau. The Steers stepped in, when Pauline decided that she would like to take her dressing case with her, and Alessandro was accordingly sent to fetch it.

"I-talian, ain't he?" asked Mr. Steers.

"Yes," answered Coutts. "He comes most highly recommended by a personal friend of mine, who has had him in his employ for over three years. My friend gave up his car this spring, and until I secured him for you Alessandro was driving a taxi. He's a good man, and I am sure that you will like him."

"He is very good-looking," said Sylvia. "So distinguished."

"Perhaps he's a nobleman in disguise," Pauline suggested.

"Well," said her father, "so long as he does his work and don't go in for joy rides and graft, I don't know as that's against him. For my part, I sorta believe in good blood. Always like to have it in dogs and horses, and I don't see why it shouldn't help in folks."

Alessandro returning at this moment with the dressing case, the motor was started, and the run to Greyside, as the place had always been known, was

quickly made. Just before they reached the place, Mr. Steers observed:

"We reckon to have some guests pretty soon. I met a young fellow in Chicago whose father I used to know—name of Payne."

"Sam Payne?" asked Coutts quickly.

"That's the man. You know him?"

"Yes. We came over on the same ship."

"He's all right," said Steers. "Reg'lar high roller, and no frills about him. He's taken some of our gas-producer-engine stock."

"He is going to marry a girl we went to school with in the East," said Pauline, "Miss Doremus. We thought she and her mother might like to visit us at the same time."

Coutts swore softly to himself.

"The Doremuses are pretty heightened, too, ain't they?" asked Mr. Steers.

"They come of an old New York family," answered Coutts.

The conversation was cut short by the motor drawing up under the spacious porte-cochère. The Steers, father and daughters, had of course already inspected Greyside, but their visit had been in the late autumn, when the house was empty and the grounds were stripped of verdure.

Mrs. Forrest and Dobbs, both smiling their welcome, were waiting on the steps. Dobbs opened the door of the tonneau, and possessed himself of their wraps and light hand luggage, which he set inside the door, then waited in the background.

"Mr. Steers," said Coutts, "this is Mrs. Forrest."

"How-de-do," said Mr. Steers genially, and shook hands with the smiling housekeeper.

"And this is Dobbs, the butler," said Coutts.

Mr. Steers showed a disposition to shake hands with Dobbs, also, but the butler bowed, and did not appear to see the movement on the part of his master. The Misses Steers shook hands with Mrs. Forrest, and returned the respectful salutation of Dobbs. When the housekeeper led them upstairs, Coutts

waited for them on the veranda. Mr. Steers was the first to appear.

"Well, well," said he, "I declare, this is more like comin' home than movin' into a new house. Everything just as nice and cozy as it can be. Flowers in the bedrooms, and everything neat as wax. You've certainly looked after us handsomely, Mr. Coutts, and I'm sure we appreciate it."

"It's all Mrs. Forrest's doing," said Coutts. "She is a very capable woman."

"She looks it—and just as nice and pretty as she can be." He glanced shrewdly at the lawyer. "I reckon she's a woman that's seen better times."

"She is a lady," Coutts answered. "Is there anything you would like before luncheon?"

"I don't know. I'm not in the habit of drinkin' liquor during the day, but this is a sorta unusual occasion. Wonder if Dobbs has got the stuff for a cocktail."

"Oh, yes. He makes a very good one, too."

Coutts arose and touched the bell, ordering a couple of cocktails. They were enjoying these when the Misses Steers came down.

"It's perfectly lovely," cried Pauline, "and Prudence is too sweet for words. I wanted to kiss her."

"She's a dear," said Sylvia, "and such a lovely accent. So English. And Mrs. Forrest is too nice for anything."

Steers twirled his black, rakish mustache.

"Since I've seen Mrs. Forrest," said he, "I'm kinda sorry I said anything about her eatin' downstairs."

"She would have done so in any case," said Coutts. "That is really the housekeeper's place."

"I s'pose it is," said Steers reflectively.

"Dobbs is a very good-looking man," said Sylvia. "If it weren't for those little side whiskers, he would be quite the gentleman. He has such nice eyes and teeth."

"He's not as handsome as Alessandro," said Pauline.

Coutts returned to New York by a night train. One of the first things which he did on his arrival was to write to Mr. Payne, taking that gentleman to some extent into his confidence in regard to the altered circumstances of Lady Forrest and Prudence Eykyn. He said:

Owing to certain financial difficulties it has been necessary for them both to find some occupation for their support. Lady Forrest was very glad to accept the position of housekeeper for Mr. Steers, she being above any silly snobbery about going into service. Miss Eykyn was less satisfied, but finally consented on the assurances of Lady Forrest and myself that she would be much better off as lady's maid in a nice family than as a nursery governess. We also argued that there was not the remotest possibility of her being confronted by any of her acquaintances while performing her duties. As you and the Doremuses are almost the only people in America whom she knows, it seems like a peculiar trick of Fate that there should be the prospect of your visiting at the house where she is in service. If you decide to go there, I wish that you would first write to Lady Forrest to say that you know of their position, and think that they have acted wisely and courageously. This will make it easier for Miss Eykyn, for Lady Forrest has no false pride in the matter. I wish, also, that you would explain the situation to Miss Doremus and her mother, when they will, I am sure, make it as easy as possible for our English friends, should they decide to visit at the Steers.

Payne immediately complied with this request. In fact, he did better, for he wrote to Lady Forrest, expressing his sympathy, and delicately intimating that if he could be of any material assistance in helping to tide over present difficulties, he hoped that she would do him the honor to call upon him without hesitation. Payne, a man of strong and not always reasonable likes and dislikes, had conceived a very warm sentiment for the two Englishwomen.

More than that, he realized that he had never felt the same restful content in the society of any other girl as that with which Prudence had imbued him. Although far from being a snob, the idea of this sweet, companionable girl occupying a position as lady's maid was exceedingly disagreeable, and he decided that when he visited the Steers in the late summer he would contrive

to have a confidential talk with her to see if something might be done to improve her circumstances.

During the summer, Coutts heard occasionally from Mrs. Forrest and Dobbs, these letters brimful of content. Dobbs' epistles were filled with a cheerful philosophy not lacking in humor. But a passage in Mrs. Forrest's latest letter caused Coutts, one day, to grow a bit pensive.

She wrote:

The Steers girls, beneath their Western "breeziness," inherit richly their father's kindness and generosity. They are thoughtful and considerate, and both are devotedly attached to Prudence, and if she were the usual lady's maid would quite succeed in spoiling her. They are forever loading her with presents, which I have told them they must not do. Prudence is giving Pauline lessons in French, and Pauline now converses quite well in that tongue with Alessandro, who is teaching her to drive. In fact, I fancy that she is learning more rapidly from Alessandro than from Prudence. Neither of the Misses Steers appears quite to understand the proper relations between masters and servants, and Sylvia talks more to Dobbs than I quite approve.

The Steers seem actually to be getting on socially, and have made some nice acquaintances through the Country Club to which you got Mr. Steers made a member.

Mr. Steers has bought three ripping hunters. He rides like a centaur, and is very handsome and distinguished-looking when mounted. We went out the other morning to watch him try the new gees on the garden hedge, and one of them turned a bit rank, but it made no more impression on Mr. Steers than if it had been a hobbyhorse. Dobbs, who certainly knows the ropes, has rather taken Mr. Steers in hand regarding his clothes, and he is now awfully well turned out.

While trying the hunters, Mr. Steers desired to watch the action of the beany one, and told James, the groom, to take him over the hedge. Poor James was scarcely up when he came a cropper, hurting his shoulder. Upon this Alessandro, who was watching, asked if he might try. Mr. Steers consented, with that dry smile of his, and upon my word, Alessandro rode nearly, if not quite, as well as his master. It appears that he was once in the Italian cavalry. Mr. Steers was tremendously pleased.

Dobbs is giving Sylvia a course in the higher possibilities of the chafing dish, but he is such a steady fellow that I scarcely see fit to object to these lessons. In fact, we are a very happy household, and I do hope that we may not be upset by the visit of Mr. Payne and Mrs. and Miss Doremus,

who are coming next week. I wrote you of Mr. Payne's letter. Poor Prudence seems very upset, but pluckily tries to conceal it.

Mr. Steers is going away for a few days. No doubt he has written you. He has seemed a little nervous lately, and I do hope that it has nothing to do with his affairs. If ever a man deserved the best the world had to give it is he, for certainly there was never a person more kindly and considerate of everybody about him.

A few days after the receipt of this interesting communication, Mr. Steers himself came into the office. Coutts was quickly conscious of the change in his client. Mr. Steers was faultlessly dressed in stylish blue serge with a Panama hat, and tie and socks perfectly in accord. His black hair, streaked with gray about the temples, was still full behind the ears, but neatly trimmed, and his formerly farouche mustache no longer suggested the faro dealer, but was crisp and waxed at the tips. But aside from the general well-groomed appearance, there were other changes. His manner was more brisk, his back straighter, and he carried his fifty years as though they were but two-score. It struck Coutts with a shock of surprise that Mr. Steers really did not need to be astride a hunter to present an appearance that was "very handsome and distinguished-looking." With his strong, sinewy figure, full chest, small waist, bronzed skin, and keen, aquiline features, the ex-miner and cowboy made in his new guise a very admirable figure of a man.

"Upon my word," said Coutts, after he had shaken hands, "you look pretty snappy."

Mr. Steers looked at him with his dry smile.

"Thanks to you," he answered, "I'm like a new man, Mr. Coutts. It's gettin' rid of that Chicawgo plant, I reckon. I tell you, sir, a man can stand a thunderin' lot of work, and worry, and business care if he's comf'table in his home. Why, do you know, in that Chicawgo barn I called a home, I've been more upset by my drunken fool of a butler than I would be buckin' a panic on the Board of Trade."

"There's nothing more annoying than

the wrong sort of servant," said Coutts. "As you say, it poisons one's life."

"It sure does. Seems to me, when a man's holdin' down a job, he owes it to his own self-respect to see that it's done well, if it's no more than feedin' pigs. When they get too good for their work, they ought to go in for bein' bank presidents and the like. What I like about the help—er—servants I've got now is that each one seems to take a personal pride in the runnin' of the whole ranch. And as for Mrs. Forrest —" A swarthy blush suffused his lean face. "Say, Mr. Coutts; do you think a nice, refined lady like her ought to eat downstairs?"

"Certainly," answered Coutts, lighting a cigarette, to hide his grin.

"Well, I don't," said Mr. Steers rebelliously. "Mrs. Forrest is a lady, and there ain't any place too good for her."

"You're rather going back on your theory, are you not?" Coutts asked. "You just said that nobody ought to be too good for his or her work."

"Well, it's a mite different with Mrs. Forrest. She sort o' keeps the whole lot of us up to the scratch. And as for running the house—say, my friend, it's wonderful. You never hear an order given, and the whole thing moves like clockwork. And the first time we came to settle up, I nigh fainted. Why, do you know, it costs less to run that big place for a month than it did to run the Chicawgo house a week? I can't understand it. Everybody says things cost more in the East."

"It's merely a question of good management and honest service," observed Coutts.

"I guess you're right. Look here; why don't you come out for a spell while Mr. Payne and the Doremuses are there? You're looking sort o' peaked, and the sea air would do you a lot of good."

"Thanks," answered Coutts, "I am very much inclined to take you up. By the way, how do you like Alessandro?"

Mr. Steers' face knit in multitudinous lines.

"I declare," said he, "I don't just know what to make o' that fella. It

seems like he was working for nothing. You naturally expect your chauffeur to get his little rake-off here and there, but Alessandro, after gettin' his, credits me with it on his book. Look here, Mr. Coutts; what d'you reckon his game is, anyhow?"

"I don't think there's any game about it," answered Coutts. "I think that he merely happens to be an honest man. They do exist, even among chauffeurs."

"Guess you're right," said Mr. Steers. "Well, you cert'n'y rounded up a high-toned lot o' help—servants. Funny, I can't seem to get used to that word. Accordin' to my raising, it was a sorta insult. You might speak of the 'hired girl' or 'hired man,' and it went, but if you spoke of one of 'em as a 'servant,' the job would ha' been empty on the spot." He arose. "Well, I must be going. Got to run down to Cedarhurst for the night to see Mr. Collingwood, the lignite man. He's a high roller, too. Worth about fifty million and got a big place. Say, how do you think I look?"

"You look very distinguished," said Coutts. "Nobody could be turned out better, and I'd give you about forty years of age."

Mr. Steers' face flushed with pleasure.

"Sure enough?" he asked. "You ain't joshin' me?"

"Not a bit of it."

"That man Dobbs is making a reg'lar dude of me," said Steers. "You ought to see my riding costum. I'd got shot for wearin' it in Arizona twenty year ago. Spend most of my time now front of the lookin'-glass. Well, I must be trottin' along. We'll look for you right soon, then."

Coutts thanked him, and Mr. Steers departed with the springy and elastic step which the knowledge of being thoroughly well groomed is apt to give the human animal.

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Doremus leaned back against the plush cushions of the Pullman, and fanned herself vigorously.

"Fancy that little chit of a Miss Eickert, or whatever her name is, giving

herself such airs on the ship when she was coming over to go into service."

"It only goes to prove," said Aline, "that one can't be too careful with whom one associates when traveling."

Mrs. Doremus nodded her approval, but Payne, who was sitting beside Aline, impatiently twisted the tip of his mustache.

"That's not quite fair," said he. "Neither she nor Lady Forrest had any such idea on the ship."

"Don't tell me," said Mrs. Doremus sharply. "I have had some experience of these foreign adventuresses. This little Miss Thing's attitude toward yourself, Samuel, was too outrageous."

"Nonsense!" snapped Payne. "If it hadn't been for her, I'd have been seasick all the way across. She is simply a nice English girl who has met with hard luck and has had to go to work. The chances are that she and Lady Forrest may have had a little money to invest, and went and lost it."

There was a cut to Payne's incisive voice which silenced the prospective mother-in-law, who had already sampled his somewhat nervous temperament, and found that it could be very bitter when served without sugar or cream. Payne detested hearing disagreeable things said of anybody, even though it might be some person whom he did not like. But to run down those with whom he was in sympathy never failed to rouse him to a high pitch of irritation. Aline and her mother were quite aware of this, but whereas Mrs. Doremus stood in some awe of her son-in-law-elect, Aline considered that she owed it to herself not to humor the arbitrary ideas of her fiancé.

"This Lady Forrest impressed me from the first as something of an adventuress," said she, in her clear, well-modulated voice. "She was evidently making a dead set for Mr. Coutts."

"Rubbish!" said Payne. "They are old friends."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Doremus, "that she has poor Mr. Steers quite dominated by this time. It looks to me very like a put-up job between Mr. Coutts and herself."

Payne squirmed uneasily. The conversation was extremely distasteful to him.

"Coutts wouldn't lend himself to anything of that sort," he protested. "In the first place, he is a gentleman, and in the second, he is far too busy a man to enter into any such silly conspiracy."

Aline's color heightened. She was not accustomed to being spoken to in this way. Moreover, from her point of view, it was exceedingly poor discipline. She was about to say something sharp when her mother, who scented a possible quarrel, deftly changed the subject.

"At any rate," said she, "Mr. Steers is far too clever a man to be drawn into any entanglement with a fortune-hunting Englishwoman. He is a man of very strong personality, and clear, sound sense. Quite a diamond in the rough. Do you really think, Samuel, that he is on the verge of making such an enormous fortune?"

"Don't see how he can help it," answered Payne. "I consider myself very lucky to be let in on the ground floor. We've got a proposition there which ought to revolutionize mechanical power. I've looked into it very carefully. Since Coutts won our lawsuit, everything appears to be clear sailing."

Mrs. Doremus fanned herself more vigorously. The prospect of financial aggrandizement never failed to excite her. She was not an extravagant woman, but a physiognomist would have read acquisitiveness in her rather long, though shapely, nose and the thin, precise lips. Mrs. Doremus had been a belle in her day, and was still handsome and of undoubted charm for the people whom she saw fit to please. She was but little on the wrong side of forty, with a girlish figure which was always exquisitely clothed and an abundant chevelure of hair, Titian red in color and naturally undulé. Her teeth were beautiful, and this fact led frequently to her gracious smile. Extreme care had kept her patrician face clear of lines, and it was only when frightened or angry that a certain hardness of expression made itself apparent

about the corners of her mouth and blue-gray eyes. Mrs. Doremus' motto might have been: "Sufficient money makes the whole world kin."

"I have once or twice considered," said Mrs. Doremus, "what a nice thing it would be if we could make a match between one of the Steers girls and Neely Stuyvesant. You know"—she looked at Payne—"Neely has lost everything he had, every penny. He and poor Livingstone went into something together, and but for Livingstone's sudden death might have made a pot of money. As it was, I understand that Neely has had to go through bankruptcy. Such a blot on the family, though of course Neely was my husband's cousin, not mine. Still, I would like to help him in some way, if it could be managed. He is absolutely worthless, but such a gentleman."

"If he's a gentleman," observed Payne dryly, "I should not call him altogether worthless. They are so few nowadays."

"I wonder what he is doing," said Aline. "I have not seen him for years."

"I do hope that he has not turned to anything which could bring discredit on the family," said her mother. "Coutts wrote me that he was very hard up, but of course there was nothing that *we* could do for him. We have little enough as it is. He pretended to paint, but his pictures looked like these signboard things that we are passing."

"Maybe he painted 'em," suggested Payne.

Mrs. Doremus gave a little shriek.

"Don't suggest anything so dreadful," she cried, tapping him playfully with her fan. "Fancy meeting Neely with a ladder under one arm and a bucket of paint on the other. But—"

"There's no danger," said Aline. "He couldn't paint well enough for that."

Mrs. Doremus glanced at her watch.

"We are nearly there," she observed. "Now, don't forget, my dear, to call Lady Forrest Mrs., and that little what's-her-name Prudence. After all, if the poor things are forced into entering service, we ought to make it as easy

for them as possible. One should always try to be kind to others. Don't you agree with me, Samuel?"

"Absolutely," answered Payne, in a dry voice. He reached forward to ring for the porter. "Especially," he added, "when it doesn't cost anything to do so."

Mr. Steers and his two pretty daughters were waiting to welcome their guests when they arrived. At the foot of the steps stood Dobbs, his usually ruddy face a little pale and a peculiar light in his eyes. Coutts, who had run down the night before, was lingering in the cool, spacious hall, an expression of annoyance on his forensic features. He was thinking what a nasty little trick Destiny had played in bringing these people of all others to that particular place.

At the head of the stairs were Mrs. Forrest and Prudence. The features of the pretty housekeeper held something of the expression which they had been wont to wear in earlier days when she had put her hunter at an Irish hedge without quite knowing what was on the other side. There was no more hint of faltering now than there had been then, and it was only when she glanced surreptitiously at Prudence that her steady, gray eyes showed any hint of misgiving.

When the gravel crunched on the drive and the vaulted porte-cochère amplified sonorously the whir of the motor, the eyes of the two Englishwomen met—and Mrs. Forrest felt a swift, warm-hearted thrill of pride in her protégée. Prudence's face was pale, and her square little jaw firmly set, but mouth and eyes were steady and undismayed. A man could scarcely appreciate the cruelty of the ordeal which the girl was called upon to face, but any woman would be able to do so. Prudence had just turned twenty years of age; until her meeting with Payne, no man had ever stirred her girlish heart. She had met him as a social equal, had been his guest. Worse than that, she had met, under the same conditions, his affianced. Now, she was

called upon to meet them both, herself *a servant*.

Subconsciously she felt that the encounter with Payne would be far less trying than that with Miss Doremus. This was natural enough. There is always to be considered the natural chivalry of the male toward the female in distress.

Yet the moment when it came was not so bad. There were a few gracious words spoken to Mrs. Forrest and herself, to which both women replied with dignity and respect. So far as the other servants or the Misses Steers, who had come up with their guests, might ascertain, the Doremuses were merely greeting with kindness and civility the housekeeper and lady's maid.

A few minutes later, Mrs. Doremus rang her bell, and Prudence knocked at the door.

"Come in," said a clear voice, and Prudence entered.

She found Mrs. Forrest talking with Mrs. Doremus. Aline, her blouse open at the back, was standing by the window, looking out pensively across the lawn.

"Prudence," said Mrs. Forrest, "will you hook up Miss Doremus?"

Prudence, her cheeks rather red, stepped over to comply. Aline turned her small, aristocratic head, and surveyed her with cool curiosity.

"How nice you look in your little apron," she said. "What have you done with all the pretty frocks you had on the boat?"

"I still have them, miss," answered Prudence steadily, and proceeded deftly to hook up the blouse.

Mrs. Doremus was vigorously "pumping" Mrs. Forrest in regard to her change of circumstances.

"And you lost your money in some unfortunate investment?" she asked. "What a pity! It must have been terribly hard for you to take a position of this sort. Was your money invested over here?"

"There wasn't a great deal, to begin with," answered Mrs. Forrest, "and as for my position as housekeeper, I have been doing precisely the same thing for

the last two years in England. The only difference was that there I was with relatives, and had a much harder time of it. I had expected to do the same thing over here, sooner or later. I had hoped that Prudence might get a position as governess. But rather than be separated from me, she chose to come here as lady's maid, and I am sure that she is far better off than she would be elsewhere as a governess."

"But that means that she takes her meals downstairs, does it not?" asked Mrs. Doremus sharply.

"Oh, naturally. But so do I, for that matter."

"Really?" exclaimed Mrs. Doremus, whose surprise at this information was genuine.

She had taken it for granted that Coutts would have explained to the Steers enough regarding Mrs. Forrest's claims to gentility to have enabled her to sit at the family table.

"Quite so," answered Mrs. Forrest. "It is much better. No good ever comes of things and people out of their places. And now, if you will excuse me, Mrs. Doremus, I will go and hurry luncheon. The family came by your train, and was quite starved on arriving. Prudence will see to having your things brushed and aired."

She left the room, and Mrs. Doremus turned to Prudence.

"You poor child," she said patronizingly, "what a comedown! Don't you find it very disagreeable to take your meals with the butler and chauffeur?"

"Not at all, ma'am," Prudence answered. "They are very respectable men, and, as Mrs. Forrest says, much more decent than the people with whom I would come in contact if I were to work in a shop or an office."

"But how do you know how to do your work?" asked Miss Doremus.

Prudence smiled faintly.

"I have always done my own work," she answered. "My aunt and I lived in Dacre on barely enough to support us, and I had to do for her."

"Then, as a matter of fact," said Mrs. Doremus, "it is not such a comedown, after all."

"I do not find it humiliating in the least, ma'am," Prudence answered. "And it is no end more interesting than my life was before."

Aline slightly raised her chin, but her mother looked thoughtful. She had been struck by the fact that here were two women of the upper class who were "in service," yet apparently quite happy, and in no way suffering from loss of self-respect. She also reflected that her own mother, the wife of a Connecticut farmer, had frequently cooked for "the hands." She could not help wondering if she herself would ever have been able to fill a "menial" position with as much dignity as these two Englishwomen whom she had rather expected to patronize.

"Who are your people in England, Prudence—if you don't mind my asking?" said she.

"My father was vicar of the church at Dacre, ma'am. My mother was born in India. She was the daughter of Colonel Sir Robert Elton, who was killed in a border war when mother was quite young."

Mrs. Doremus looked rather upset.

"Well," said she, "it certainly does not seem quite right that the granddaughter of a colonel in the British army should be out in service. But this is, after all, a topsy-turvy world. It would not surprise me in the least to learn that the chauffeur was of noble birth. Did you notice him, Aline?"

"Yes. He's very good-looking. And I'm sure I've seen Dobbs before."

"I was similarly impressed," said her mother. "There was a note in his voice—some place where we have visited, no doubt. Butlers drift about so. Are you ready, my dear?"

There was a discreet rap at the door, and the voice of Dobbs was heard, saying:

"Luncheon is served, madam."

CHAPTER VIII.

Perhaps it was due to the increased nervousness with which he had been afflicted since quitting the shores of France, or perhaps it was merely Fate which led Payne to arise early the

morning after his arrival at Greyside. It is also possible that without realizing it, he may have desired an hour of uninterrupted peace before the appearance of his fiancée.

At any rate, it was a little after seven when he strayed out into the fresh and fragrant morning, and, being a man of strong mechanical bent, he decided to visit the garage, Mr. Steers having told him the night before that he had installed a lathe, forge, and other machinery for doing his own repair work.

The path to the garage led through the new Italian garden, and as Payne passed down under the pergola, he was filled with admiration for the skill of the landscape gardener who had laid out the different architectural features. Payne would have been greatly interested to know that this artist was none other than Alessandro, the chauffeur, and that the gardens were exactly reproduced in miniature from those upon the ancestral home of this gentleman.

From beneath the pergola one obtained only a vista of the sunk garden which appeared between the two trim cypress trees at the head of the terrace steps. But as Payne passed between these dark-green sentinels, a charming picture presented itself.

In the middle of one of the multicolored flower plats, a girl in white was gathering a basketful of late roses. Payne, a connoisseur in artistic and charming effects, could find absolutely no fault with the way in which the sun shimmered on her bright hair and bathed her round forearms in its creamy light. He also observed that she was singing softly to herself.

"Prudence," thought Payne. "Now is a good chance to say a few words to her. How nice she looks, down there among the roses."

His memory flashed back to the early-morning promenades aboard the ship, and he gave a little sigh at the recollection of the peaceful happiness which he had felt during those brisk walks on the breezy deck. He had often thought of those meetings, marveling greatly at their content, the more remarkable for the unsympathetic element which sur-

rounded them. He sighed again as he started down the steps.

Prudence had not discovered him. She was turned slightly away, her skirt pinned up in such manner as to prettily reveal a pair of ankles which Watteau would have liked to paint. Busy with her roses, she did not hear Payne's approach until he was within two or three paces. Then she turned quickly, straightening her supple young figure with a gesture full of grace.

"Oh!" she gasped, and her blue eyes seemed to darken. The rich color faded from her cheeks. The little fancywork basket slipped from her bare elbow and fell to the ground, scattering its floral contents. The scissors dropped from her fingers, and for a moment she stared, eyes wide, a little frightened and her breath coming quickly.

"Mr. Payne," she murmured, and the color flooded her face again. Her eyes grew humid, and she looked as if she were going to cry.

Payne stepped to her side.

"I'm sorry I startled you," he said. "I wanted to see if I could walk up to you without your discovering me. You'll forgive me?"

"I—of course. I felt that you—that somebody was near, even before I heard your step." Her eyes were turned to the ground. "You made me spill my roses."

Payne stooped to gather up the flowers. Prudence did the same, and Payne would scarcely have been human had he failed to appreciate the dainty wrists and pretty, pink-tipped fingers. The roses recovered, Payne straightened up and surveyed her with a smile.

"You look like a Watteau shepherdess," said he, and there was in his keen eyes a certain quality of admiration which those of a young man engaged to another girl had absolutely no right to contain.

Prudence's color heightened. She suddenly became conscious that her shapely limbs were visible halfway between knee and ankle, and hastily proceeded to remedy this by plucking out the pins which held her skirt.

"I—I didn't expect to see anybody so early," said she, and added: "Do you think that I am too dressy for my part? Miss Sylvia and Miss Pauline like me to wear pretty things."

"I think that you are quite perfect," said Payne, and added quite unnecessarily: "I have thought so since first I met you."

Prudence had quite recovered her self-possession.

"You must not say things like that to me, Mr. Payne. And you must not stand here talking to me, either. Remember, I am a lady's maid now. Besides, Miss Doremus would not like it."

"That would not be so odd," said Payne, "considering how few of my acts meet with her approval. What did she say to you yesterday?"

"She was very nice. She asked me if I did not find it humiliating to be a servant."

"Do you call that nice? I don't." Payne's voice had the snappish quality which for some reason Prudence loved. "What did Mrs. Doremus say?"

"She asked me who my people were in England. When I told her, she seemed rather sorry for me."

"Are you sorry for yourself?"

"Not one bit. At first it was a little hard, but Lady Forrest kept up my courage by her own example. Then, after I got to know the Steers, I really began to like it here. They are so nice; even when something goes wrong they are always sweet to me. And Mr. Steers is so good and kind. He treats me as if I were one of his family. Really, I'm not the least to be pitied, Mr. Payne."

Payne surveyed her thoughtfully.

"I don't pity you," he said slowly. "I admire you. But what is to be the outcome of it? You are too fine to keep on indefinitely as a lady's maid."

"There is not much else for me to do."

Payne looked rather disturbed.

"No doubt Coutts is right," said he, "in claiming that you are better off here than you would be as a stenographer or teacher or in a shop or anything of the sort. At the same time, it's pretty

rough. However, I want you to promise me one thing, and that is that if you ever should want to fit yourself for something more profitable, should want to study or anything of the sort, you will let me help you. I don't like to think of my little shipmate as being at the beck and call of people like—well, Mrs. Doremus, for instance. Will you promise me that—Prudence?"

Prudence dropped her hands to her sides. Her eyes were lowered also. She looked rather like a pretty little girl being scolded.

"Yes, Mr. Payne, and thank you so much," said she.

Her eyes were brimming, and to hide her emotion she stooped to clip a rose which was brushing invitingly against her knee. Perhaps her vision was a trifle clouded, for the first thing which she gathered was a very large and vicious thorn.

"Ouch!" cried Prudence, snatching away her hand.

"What's the matter? A thorn?"

"Yes."

She showed him a finger with the thorn still imbedded. Payne reached for her hand. Prudence drew it away.

"Let me see," snapped Payne, and captured the soft, round wrist.

A tremor rippled up Prudence's arm, then went down through her to the very ground, shouting alarms as it went. Payne deftly drew out the thorn, and a drop of crimson followed it. Prudence put the finger in her pink mouth, looked at Payne, and laughed. Her face was like the roses in her basket. There was a tinge of red in Payne's patrician face and a sparkle in his granite-colored eyes.

"You pretty thing," said he involuntarily. "I'd like——" He checked himself abruptly.

"You'd better go away now, Mr. Payne," said Prudence.

"I think I had."

He gave a short laugh, but showed no sign of moving until there came from the direction of the pergola the sound of a clear and musical voice, which called: "Oh, Sammy!"

Both of the culprits started violently.

Prudence stooped to gather another rose. Payne, glancing over his shoulder, saw Aline standing at the head of the terrace steps.

"They all have thorns," he muttered sadly, and turned away.

Aline's pretty face was flying storm signals as he approached.

"Pray don't let me interrupt if you are busy," said she, in her very clear, carefully modulated voice, and Payne felt as though all the glory of the midsummer morning had faded.

"Don't be sarcastic, my dear," said he. "I was on my way to the garage, and merely stopped to say a few words to Miss Eykyn." Payne's face had suddenly assumed the nervous look which of late had become an habitual expression. "You told me that you were going to sleep late, this morning, to rest up after your journey."

"Oh! So you thought that it would be quite safe to resume the early morning tête-à-têtes begun on the ship? I thought that you might." She checked herself, biting her red lip.

"Don't be silly, Aline."

Payne's voice was quiet, but he was smarting, within. Aline, then, had got up early with the express purpose of keeping her eye upon him. Payne's ire rose, but he was learning self-control.

"Silly!" echoed Aline. "Do you call it silly, when a girl is engaged, for her to resent playing second fiddle to a maidservant?"

Aline had lost her temper. She had observed the incident of the thorn, and was not pleased at the gallantry of her fiancé.

"Don't talk like that," said Payne wearily. "It was natural enough that I should speak to the girl."

"Also, that you should hold her hand. Yes, I believe it was—quite natural."

"I was not holding her hand. She got a thorn in her finger, and I pulled it out."

"How nice of you! I am surprised that you did not kiss the spot to make it well. How nice of you! I never knew that you were so gallant, but I suppose that it comes of your French associa-

tions. Still, I did hope that you were rather better bred than to keep a morning rendezvous with a servant."

Aline was working herself into a nice little rage. Spoiled and pampered like so many of her class, she could not endure the slightest criticism of her perfect self. Moreover, Payne's previous submission had rather deceived her. What was merely self-control, Aline took for doglike devotion. She considered her power over him as absolute.

She decided to read the riot act.

"Perhaps," said she, "you would prefer that we were not even engaged. I am sure my patience is nearly at an end. I object, and very seriously, to a rival in the shape of a maidservant who no doubt is no better than she ought to be."

"Aline! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I did not think that you could be so cattish as to—"

"Oh!" Her voice was becoming shrill. "So I am a cat, am I? That is a nice, gentlemanly thing to have said to you by your fiancé. However, we can soon remedy that part of it."

She walked swiftly to the house, entering by one of the open French windows of the library. Payne followed, angry and dejected. Inside the house, Aline dropped into a chair before a little writing table. It was in her mind to make Payne's punishment and subjugation complete.

"My dear girl—" Payne began nervously, but Aline interrupted him.

"One minute, please," said she in her very clearest voice, and began to write hastily.

"There," said she, springing up from her chair and handing her communication to Payne. "This makes it quite official, does it not?" She dropped him a sweeping curtsy. "So glad to have had the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Payne!" she cried in a mocking voice, and swept out of the room and up the broad stairway.

With trembling fingers, Payne raised the note handed him, and read as follows:

MY DEAR MR. PAYNE: After what has just occurred, I feel that it would be most

inadvisable for us to enter together the bonds of holy matrimony. It appears that we are quite unsuited to one another, both temperamentally and in our relative points of view.

I therefore take pleasure in releasing you absolutely from the engagement into which we have entered, and request that you will be as chivalrous as you are gallant, and accord me my liberty also.

Yours very truly,
ALINE CALVERT DOREMUS.

Payne read slowly the note, then folded it carefully between his fingers. He was standing with a somnambulistic expression on his usually alert features when he heard behind him a crisp "Good morning, Payne," and turned to see Coutts as he entered the room.

"Ah—good morning," said Payne vacantly.

He stared for a moment at Coutts. Then, as one who acts on sudden impulse, he handed him Aline's note.

"Read that, old chap," said Payne.

Coutts' trained eye raced through the note.

"When did you receive this?" he asked.

"About two minutes ago—or it may have been twenty. My fiancée came on me while I had stopped for a moment in the sunk garden to speak to our little friend, Prudence. I was on my way to the garage. Prudence was picking roses, and got a thorn in her finger. I was picking it out." He gave his dry smile. "Miss Doremus would accept no explanation. She expressed herself more vindictively than reasonably in regard to Prudence, whom I felt bound to defend. Then she came here and wrote me this *billet-doux*."

Coutts did not smile. His eyes were watching Payne with their cynically thoughtful expression.

"I suppose that you are horribly cut up about it," said he.

Coutts' forensic eye had observed that Payne's expression was something like that of the man who has just fallen from a balloon, and feels himself over with the view of estimating the damage before adopting any befitting line of conduct and appearance.

"Yes—naturally," Payne answered

vaguely, "though to tell the truth, Coutts, I'm more dazed than anything else. I feel as if I'd——"

"Left the road when doing about ninety in your car and landed gently in a heap of new-mown hay," suggested Coutts. "What are you going to do about it, now that you find there's nothing broken?"

"Hanged if I know!" said Payne, who appeared still dazed.

"Will you be advised by me?"

"In what way?"

"In all ways. Payne"—Coutts' voice was very serious—"you have just had a miraculous escape from a matrimonial tragedy. Now, listen to me, my dear fellow; I am acting quite disinterestedly, because, as sure as I am standing here, if you and Miss Doremus were to marry, I'd have you in my office within a year's time to arrange the terms for divorce. Or, if I did not, some one else would. You two people are about as well fitted to live quietly together as a handful of gunpowder and a lighted match. Honestly, now, don't you think so?"

"Hanged if I'm not inclined to agree with you—but——"

"But you don't quite like to admit it. I understand. The eternal American sucker."

"Oh, come!" said Payne sharply. "I know that I've got a beastly, irritable disposition."

"Quite so. All the more reason for you to be chivalrous and save Miss Doremus from the terrible consequences." Coutts' voice was very urbane. "Only," he continued, "if you want to do so you have got to act quickly. Once the old—h'm, once Mrs. Doremus learns what has happened, you will be led back to the sacrifice by one badly stretched ear. Now, look here; will you put yourself in my hands in this unfortunate matter?"

"Yes, old chap. Oh, this is awful!"

"Sit down at that desk," Coutts interrupted, "and write as I tell you." He glanced at the clock. "We've mighty little time to spare."

Payne nervously seated himself, when Coutts dictated the following:

"MY DEAR MISS DOREMUS: In answer to your letter requesting that our engagement to be married be herewith annulled, I feel that I am bound to accede. You are no doubt right in saying that our action was unwise from the start, and I deeply regret having been the cause of your unfortunate choice in the matter.

"Since you have expressed the desire that all should be over between us, I feel that my presence here can give you only annoyance and inconvenience. I am therefore leaving the house at once and will sail for Europe—"

"What's that?" Payne cried.

"You are off for France to-morrow, my dear fellow," said Coutts. "The Atlantic Ocean is all too narrow to promise you absolute safety, but it is the best that we can do. Besides, there's your *château*, and the *chasse* opens next month. You can wire to have your new car meet you at Cherbourg or Havre. The run back will brace you up."

"Oh, well," said Payne helplessly, "since I'm in the hands of my lawyer, what's the use? Go on."

Coutts continued to dictate:

"To-morrow morning. My respects to Mrs. Doremus, and with all best wishes for the future happiness in which I am unfortunately not destined to share.

"Always sincerely your friend,

"SAMUEL FELLOWES PAYNE."

"Put that into an envelope, and address it," said Coutts brusquely.

He touched the bell. Dobbs appeared on the threshold.

"Dobbs," said Mr. Coutts, "drop whatever you are doing and go at once to Mr. Payne's room, pack up his things as quickly as you can, and take the luggage at once to the garage. Telephone to Alessandro to be ready to leave at once for Manchester. Don't say a word to a soul. I do not want anybody to know that Mr. Payne is leaving."

"Very good, sir," said Dobbs, and went out.

"Now," said Coutts, giving Payne no time to speak, "write another letter—to Mr. Steers. Say that you and Miss Doremus have had a disagreement, and that she has broken your engagement. Say that, under the circumstances, it would be very trying for you both to be

in the same house, and that you have decided to return at once to Europe. You might add, if you like, that, since he expects to go abroad with his daughters this autumn, you are counting on their spending some time at your *château*. Write that as quickly as you can."

Payne, whom Coutts had managed to imbue with the sensations of an escaping convict, complied. Coutts took the note.

"I will attend to the delivery of these two," said he. "I will keep Miss Doremus' communication for possible reference. Now, come—quick. There is somebody coming down."

He rushed the dazed young man through the hall, barely giving him time to snatch his hat, then out of the door and down to the garage, where they found Alessandro getting into his livery. A few moments later, Dobbs appeared with Payne's luggage, which was quickly put aboard the car. Coutts and the still-bewildered Payne stepped into the car, and Alessandro started the motor.

"Upon my word," snapped Payne, "you are certainly rushing me off."

"It is my fault," said Coutts, "that you ever should have rushed into this mess, and I've been uneasy in my mind ever since. The very least that I can do is to rush you out of it at the very earliest opportunity which presents itself." He leaned forward. "Go out the side entrance," he said to Alessandro, "and hurry."

Two seconds later, Mr. Samuel Payne was en route for his *château* in the province of Seine et Marne.

CHAPTER IX.

Miss Pauline Steers, standing in the open door of the garage, watched the approach of the car with a flushed and angry face.

Alessandro had taken the abrupt curve with skill and due consideration of the border, and was going into his second speed when he caught sight of Pauline. The result was a somewhat rough transmission both of cog gears and psychic waves. He rolled into the

garage, threw his lever into the dead point, cut off the current, and descended with haste.

Pauline was regarding him with an expression upon her pretty face in which anger struggled against admiration and some more tender emotion. Alessandro, as he stood before her in his well-fitting costume of deep maroon with visored cap and neat gaiters, was a very admirable figure of a man. There was a rich flush on his clean-cut, high-bred face, a glow in his dark eyes, and his white, even teeth flashed as he gave her his pleasing smile. But Pauline was not to be so easily propitiated.

"Where have you been?" she demanded, trying to put an unnatural sharpness in her soft voice. "I must say, Alessandro, when you make the rather unusual request that I should come down to the garage early, I should think that at least you would have more respect than to keep me waiting."

"Ah, Mees Pauline," cried Alessandro, "I am desolated. It is not my fault. I was obliged to take Meester Payne to ze station."

"To the station?" Pauline exclaimed. "What for?"

"Zat I do not know. He has departed wiz his luggage."

"Mr. Payne has *gone*!" cried the girl. "What in the world do you mean?"

Alessandro threw out both hands with a gesture of ignorance.

"I do not know, Mees Pauline. Mr. Coutts will explain. He went wiz Meester Payne to ze station, and I have just left him at ze house."

Pauline knit her pretty brows.

"I wonder," she said slowly, more to herself than to Alessandro, "if he and Miss Doremus could have quarreled?"

Alessandro smiled cheerfully.

"I t'ink so, Mees Pauline," said he; "I could not help but hear some of ze conversation. Meester Coutts will tell you."

Pauline glanced at him sharply. Alessandro's face was radiant, and as the blue eyes of the girl met his brown ones Pauline received a glance so warm and caressing that her heart gave a sudden bound. But she was angry and

mystified, less at the extraordinary departure of Payne than at the joyous demeanor of her chauffeur, who appeared to be having a hard struggle to contain some sort of exuberant emotion.

"What is the matter with you?" she demanded. "Why did you ask me to come down here at this hour, and what makes you look so happy?"

"Ah, Mees Pauline," cried Alessandro, apparently no longer able to control his feelings, "my cousin is dead."

Pauline's blue eyes opened very wide. As an explanation of consuming joy, this circumstance seemed hardly adequate.

"Your cousin is dead," she repeated. "And is that the reason for your being so happy and excited? Why don't you stand still?" For Alessandro showed a strong disposition to pirouette about the floor of the garage.

"I can hardly explain to you, Mees Pauline. Yesterday I saw in ze paper zat he was dead of an inflammation. I sent some cables, and zis morning I have ze answer. It is true." And Alessandro did a little *pas seul* before the astonished eyes of the girl.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself to be so happy because your cousin is dead," said Pauline severely. "I suppose he left you some money?"

"Not much, Mees Pauline. But he has left me more zan zat. He has left me ze old estates of my family, where we have lived for many hundreds of years, and now"—his eyes glowed at her—"I am ze Conte Alessandro di Monterubbiano." He gave a little skip, then paused, and glowed at the astonished girl. "Eet is one of ze oldest titles in Italy, and zere is a great castle which looks out on ze Adriatic. Most of eet is in ruins. I mean ze castle. And zere are great properties. Most of zem are mortgaged." He beamed upon her. "But zere is not'ing ze matter wiz ze title."

"What are you?" cried Pauline. "Say it again."

Alessandro placed his well-shaped hand upon his chest.

"I am ze Conte, or, as you say in English, ze Count Alessandro di Mon-

terubbiano"—he leaned forward, and laid one finger on his lips—"and ze lady I may marry will be ze Contessa—Countess—"

"Di Monterubbiano!" cried Pauline breathlessly. "Oh, Alessandro, I am so glad for you. I was sure that you were a disguised nobleman. I am—so—glad for you." She dropped her eyes.

Alessandro stepped to her side. The flush had left his cheeks, and he was slightly pale.

"Ah, Mees Pauline," he cried, "but it ees not for myself zat I am so glad. Listen, Mees Pauline." His rich Italian voice had dropped in pitch, and held a deep, caressing quality. "From ze moment when my eyes have rested on you, I have loved. Never before have I seen a woman for whom my soul has been so hungry. You are to me my life, and my heart, and my hope of heaven. You are a lovely flower; a great rose wiz ze petals just beginning to open from ze heat of ze sun, and my only wish is to wear you always on my heart. I love you, Mees Pauline, I adore you. And sometimes I have needed all of my strength zat I should not tell you so. Because I was chauffeur. But now, I am ze Count di Monterubbiano, and I may tell you, as I do, and ask you to be my lovely contessa." He dropped gracefully on one knee, took the girl's unresisting hand, and raised it to his lips. "Will you marry me, my Pauline?" he said, and rose to his feet.

Pauline's eyes were brimming over, and her face was indeed like the rose which Alessandro's Italian eloquence had described. With a rapturous little cry, she turned and flung her arms about his neck.

"Alessandro," she cried, "I adore you. I have loved you from the first. I would have married you as chauffeur, if you had asked me."

But the rest of her maiden confession was smothered in the tropical caresses of the Conte di Monterubbiano.

While these agreeable events were taking place in the garage, others, less joyful, were transpiring in the house.

To describe the emotions of Mrs. Doremus when Aline, in a scared but sulky manner, handed her the note from Payne, which Coutts had just sent up, would be to dwell upon a subject so extremely disagreeable that it had far better be left to the imagination.

For Mrs. Doremus, during the space of several minutes, had been left utterly speechless by chagrin. This brief lull before the storm was followed by a devastating anger, during which Aline received an insight into her mother's deeper nature by which she ought to have profited, considering that much which she observed was not lacking in her own charming personality.

Mrs. Doremus' outburst was followed, however, by a calmer and more practical attitude. She knew the world and its people, and she was quick to recognize the hand of an enemy in that which had occurred.

"It's all this wretched Coutts' doing," said she to Aline. "Samuel would never have acted in such a dastardly and caddish manner on his own initiative. He would never have dared."

"I'm sure I don't care," said Aline petulantly. "Sam was always utterly impossible. We hadn't a thing in common, and he wasn't man enough to learn to like the things that I liked."

"What can you expect from an idle, pampered creature of his kind?" demanded her mother. "But now you have acted like a silly little fool, and gone and spoiled it all. It is all the doing of that scoundrelly lawyer, Coutts. When I got his letter, threatening to attack my claim to the property made over to me by your unfortunate father, I knew that he was a dangerous and unscrupulous man."

"Do you think that Sam actually will sail to-morrow?" asked Aline.

For all her pique, the girl was badly scared. And in spite of her youth, her head was better than that of her mother. Although she had acted in a spirit of resentment in writing and handing to Payne the note breaking her engagement, there had still been a certain amount of method in her madness. She had thought that this cold

and official manner of breaking her engagement would strike to his heart a chill of terror which would prove far more effective than any spoken words. She had expected that he would wilt, crumble, and dissolve into a pasty mass of abject apology and remorse. And this, she thought, would furnish him with a salubrious lesson, and result in the final fixing of their respective relations, assuring her a supremacy compared to which her former dominion over him would be that of an insecurely throned empress.

In all of this she had not been very far wrong. Payne had for woman-kind in general, and his fiancée in particular, an inherited reverence. It was more than possible that but for the timely interference of that cynic, Coutts, he would have made the miserable finish anticipated by Aline, and of which the best that can be said is that he would have been in good company. But due to Coutts, Payne had made good his escape, and the question now was: How to hale him back?

"He will undoubtedly be sailing by the *Mauretania*," said Mrs. Doremus. "You know, he never makes the voyage except on the fastest ship, and the *Mauretania* sails to-morrow. I shall send him two wires, one to the Union Club and the other to the ship. I shall say something of this sort: 'Aline in dangerous condition, prostrated by grief and remorse. Doctor urges your immediate return.' This will be quite true. You look very badly, my dear. I think that you had better go to bed at once, and I will send for the local practitioner."

This excellent advice was promptly acted on. Aline took to her bed, refusing all nourishment but iced champagne, sweetbreads, and *poulet au riz*. Pauline having a plentiful supply of French novels, she managed to survive the next twenty-four hours, with the added assistance of nougat and chocolates.

Payne duly received the dispatch, and would undoubtedly have returned but for the fact that Coutts had offered to bet him five dollars to one hundred that

he would receive a wire couched in almost the precise terms as that sent by Mrs. Doremus. Payne had not seen fit to take the bet, but when the telegram was received his face was not pleasant to see. He tore the tragic message in two, called a cab, and went aboard the ship, vaguely wishing that there was a certain girl with blue eyes and bright hair to see him safely through the coming ordeal.

CHAPTER X.

When noon of the following day was reached, with no news of the departed one, Mrs. Doremus found herself the prey of a number of very disagreeable reflections. By no means the mildest of these was the desire to be revenged on Coutts, whom she rightly regarded as the principal cause of the calamity.

Aline, alternating sulks and temper, was still in bed, where she was tenderly compassionated by Sylvia and Pauline, the latter too full of her own secret happiness to prove a very effective consolatrice, while Sylvia appeared worried and preoccupied about some matter in which she had not consulted her sister. Alessandro had sent more cables, and was awaiting their reply before announcing either to Coutts or his employer his change of circumstance. Mr. Steers had been made cognizant by Coutts of the circumstances of Payne's escape, the captions of the lawyer on the wisdom of the act providing Mr. Steers with considerable secret amusement.

Neither Mrs. Doremus nor Aline had so far made any revelations in regard to the part played by Prudence in the tragedy. Neither kindness nor a sense of justice had any part in this reticence, but it had occurred to Mrs. Doremus that, if the Steers were to be informed of the true stations of their housekeeper and lady's maid, it was very possible that instead of resenting Coutts' act in guarding the secret of their antecedents, the kind and simple-hearted Steers might find their sympathies aroused for two ladies forced by circumstance to enter menial service.

But Mrs. Doremus was convinced that the lawyer's duplicity was not limited to the finding of their situations for the housekeeper and lady's maid. Alessandro's high-bred manner and appearance had not escaped her argus eye, and she was sure that the chauffeur was a man above his station. More than this, she had that very morning intercepted a look of tender intelligence which had passed between Pauline and the chauffeur when the car had come to take them for a spin, and she strongly suspected a secret understanding between the two. She was further puzzled by some familiar quality in the voice and expression of Dobbs. Mrs. Doremus was a woman of the world and accustomed to the best of service, but she told herself that in all of her experience she had never encountered domestics of the class of those in the Steers' household, and her host had told her that there had been obtained for him by Mr. Coutts.

Mrs. Doremus suspected conspiracy. In fact, to some extent, she suspected the truth. Coutts, she thought, had for reasons best known to himself palmed off as servants a group of people who were decidedly above their stations, though what his object might be in doing so, Mrs. Doremus was unable to guess. The personality of Alessandro interested her the most, merely because she felt sure that there existed some understanding between this gentleman and Pauline, and Mrs. Doremus decided that she must know a little more about the handsome Italian.

Wherefore, shortly after luncheon, when Mr. Steers and Coutts were in the office of the former discussing some business affair, and Sylvia and Pauline were upstairs with Aline, Mrs. Doremus, who had been writing a letter, decided to stroll casually past the garage and have a few pleasant words with Alessandro. She was about to go out, when, glancing through the library window, she saw Pauline herself walking across the lawn in the direction of the Italian garden.

Mrs. Doremus' suspicions were aroused. There was something in

Pauline's manner that held her attention, and as Mrs. Doremus watched her she saw the girl glance back over her shoulder as though to ascertain if anybody was about.

"Now, what is she up to?" said Mrs. Doremus to herself, for it was very hot, and not the hour which one would select for a stroll.

Pauline disappeared over the edge of the terrace, when Mrs. Doremus stepped out of the long French window, and followed her. She crossed the lawn, and as she reached the top of the terrace steps she saw Pauline leaving the other end of the garden and walking in the direction of the garage.

Mrs. Doremus' eyes narrowed. She felt that as a possible future stepmother she was acting quite within her duty to find out what Pauline was doing in the garage. She could easily explain her own errand by saying that she wished to consult Alessandro in regard to a small electric coupé which she thought of purchasing for use in town. This would be, in fact, the truth, as she and Aline had spoken of such a project.

Wherefore the good lady went assuredly ahead, and was almost to the open doors when she was brought up "all standing," as sailors say, by a succession of sibilant sounds much in vogue between young people of opposite sex who find mere words an inadequate method of expressing their high, mutual esteem.

Mrs. Doremus' face grew wild. Shades of Venus and Vulcan! Pauline was being kissed! And by the Italian chauffeur! Worse than that, unless her ears deceived her, Pauline was kissing back. Horror of horrors! Pauline was also murmuring soft sounds, which suggested the ecstatic purring of a pussy cat. And then, to the scandalized ears of the listener came Alessandro's rich, Italian voice, murmuring: "Ah, my Pauline, I love you. I love you so." This utterance was followed by certain rustlings, such as starched muslin might emit if crumpled by a pair of athletic arms. Followed more of the aforesaid sibilant sounds, which are not expressive of dislike.

Mrs. Doremus, her aristocratic features very red, turned and fled. She felt as though she had assisted at a medieval court of love. What might subsequently happen to Pauline was shrouded in the rosy mist of ardent vows, and impossible to predicate, but Mrs. Doremus thought that she could form a good idea of what would happen to Alessandro as soon as she discharged her unpleasant duty to Mr. Steers. Coutts, also, might share indirectly in the holocaust, for with all of his kindness of heart the paternal examiner and cowboy was not the man to temper mercy with justice when his daughter was being crumpled in the arms of his Italian chauffeur.

Mrs. Doremus could hardly wait. She had left the doors of the library open, and she softly entered the house and walked across the room, and through the hall to the door of the "office," where she had left her host closeted with Coutts. The little room was empty, and the self-elected duenna turned her steps toward the dining room.

The table had been cleared and the room darkened, but as she was about to return she heard a rustle from the spacious pantry, before the open door of which there stood a handsome screen. The next instant there came to her startled ears the sound of Sylvia's dulcet voice as it said tremulously:

"Oh, my darling, why *will* you be so obstinate?"

Mrs. Doremus' aristocratic head went up like that of a war horse which smells gunpowder. Her sensitive ears pricked forward. Then, from the pantry, came a little rustle, a tremulous sigh, and the exact duplicate of the abominable, oscillatory sounds which had assailed her senses a few minutes earlier as she stood outside the garage.

Mrs. Doremus wished that she had her salts. Stifled little sounds, in no way expressive of discontent, came from the pantry, and traversed the ample dining room as though it had been a whispering gallery. There was the slightest scuffle of feet, then: "No! No! Not here!" said Sylvia's voice.

"Then you must be careful how you come into my lair," came in the pleasant tones of Dobbs. "It's subjecting frail mortal clay to too great a strain." And there followed another of the compromising sounds and stifled laughter.

Mrs. Doremus turned, and slipped noiselessly from the room. Shocked and startled as she was at the discoveries of the morning, yet deeper still was the glow of triumph. For with the knowledge which Heaven, or some other agency had sent her, she felt that her enemy lay within her power.

But the manner in which she might best wield to her full advantage the weapons now in her hands required careful consideration. Realizing that when it came to making trouble, two heads were better than one, she hurried up to her room, where she found Aline, who had tired of bed, sitting fully dressed by the open window.

Aline looked up as her mother entered, and her pretty, petulant face lighted at the triumphant expression of her parent.

"You've heard from him?" she cried.

"No, Aline. I am afraid that your faint-hearted fiancé has played the cad. Coutts' influence has been too strong for his faint sense of decency. I think, however, that I have an efficient checkmate for Mr. Coutts. It is precisely as I thought. He has filled this house with creatures intended to prey on our poor, unsophisticated friends." And she straightway put Aline in full possession of the results of her stalk.

"What are you going to do?" asked Aline.

"First of all, I am going to talk to Dobbs, and ask him a few questions in regard to his designs on Sylvia. The chances are that he will become frightened, and let out something which may incriminate Coutts. I shall try to learn something about Alessandro. No doubt, on my threatening to tell Mr. Steers what I have discovered, he will make a clean breast of it."

Aline nodded.

"Have him come here," she said. "I'd like to hear what he says, and I'm so beastly bored. That Prudence was

in here a few minutes ago. She looked as if she had been crying."

"What did you say to her?"

"I said that it might gratify her to know that she had been the direct cause of my having had to break my engagement."

"What did she say?"

"Merely that she was very sorry. I couldn't get a thing out of her. She was too clever to try to defend herself or say anything which might give me the chance to put her in her place. I think that she is sly."

"They are all sly," said her mother, with delightful unconsciousness of her own maneuvers of the past hour, "as sly as cats. But there is going to be a number of changes in this house before long, or I am very much mistaken."

In which the good lady was perfectly correct.

CHAPTER XI.

Dobbs closed the door behind him, and stood respectfully waiting to be addressed. Mrs. Doremus, sitting very straight in her chair, surveyed him through her pince-nez. Her eyes were hard as adamant, her mouth compressed, and she rather suggested a chief inquisitor. Aline, by the window, was studying Dobbs curiously, through half-lidded eyes.

"Dobbs," said Mrs. Doremus, "I wish to speak to you on a very serious matter."

"Yes, madam."

Dobbs' voice was smooth, as a butler's should be, yet it seemed to Aline that there were a peculiar light in his pale-blue eyes and a certain rigidity to his features. Also, the usual pink flush of his clear skin was missing. Dobbs, the butler, was a good-looking man of the comfortable, well-fed type. His features were high and regular, amiable in expression, and his general appearance was the acme of neatness. At the present moment he had about him an unwonted air of alertness.

Mrs. Doremus, observing him closely, was again disturbed by the elusive impression of some previous associa-

tion with the man. This emotion was doubtless more psychic than physical in source. She had not seen Cornelius Stuyvesant for about five years, he having carefully avoided her propinquity. Also, he had put on considerable weight since that time, while no disguise could be no more effective than that produced by the change from hair of artistic length and a spiked beard to his present tonsure and trim "sideboards."

"Dobbs," said Mrs. Doremus, "I have, this morning, made quite by accident two most shocking and disagreeable discoveries. The first is that of the reprehensible relations existing between Miss Pauline and the Italian chauffeur."

She paused, much surprised at the unmistakable and genuine astonishment on the face of the butler.

"What, madam?" he cried involuntarily.

"Yes. In going to the garage to consult with Alessandro in regard to an electric car which I think of purchasing, I actually discovered him presuming to make love to Miss Pauline."

To the indignation of Mrs. Doremus, Dobbs' immobile face lighted with pleasure and a hint of amusement. But he quickly controlled his features.

"You look pleased, Dobbs," observed Mrs. Doremus acidly. "Perhaps, however, you may be less gratified when I tell you that later on, when going into the dining room for a glass of water, I was scandalized to overhear certain expressions of endearment between Miss Sylvia and yourself."

This time Dobbs fulfilled her anticipations in his expression of utter dismay. Then the blood poured into his face, and a dangerous gleam appeared in his light-colored eyes. He did not speak, but glanced quickly from mother to daughter, and Mrs. Doremus was reminded of the proverb: "Beware the fury of the sheep."

"Now, Dobbs," said she, "can you tell me of any reason why I should not put Mr. Steers in immediate possession of the unfortunate facts which I have learned?"

Dobbs appeared to reflect for an in-

stant. The high color faded, and his amiable face grew stern.

"Yes, Mrs. Doremus," said he. "There are quite a number of very good reasons. But the one which will commend itself the most to you and your daughter"—he glanced at Aline—"is that if you were to make such a disclosure, you would bring to light the embarrassing fact that a close connection of your own is a servant in this house."

He stepped forward so that the light from the window struck full upon his face.

"Don't you recognize me, Cousin Elsa?" he asked dryly.

Mrs. Doremus sprang forward in her chair. Even Aline started upright, spilling her chocolates on the floor. The exclamation that burst from the lips of both women was almost simultaneous.

"Cornelius Stuyvesant!" they cried.

Dobbs bowed. "Alias Dobbs," said he dryly.

Mrs. Doremus sank back in her chair, her arms falling limply at her sides. Her face was for the moment that of a person who unmasks. Ugly little lines of spite, and cruelty, and fear came out around her mouth, and her eyes looked sunken and baleful. She was, beneath her *grande-dame* exterior, a snobbish woman, who had married rather above her station and into one of the first families of America, but she had accepted the fortune which brought her luxury and social authority as the mere payment of a debt which society owed to one of her charm, intelligence, and dominant personality, rendering no thanks for what she felt to be due her.

Now she felt her anger rise to a boiling point. She reached for her salts, then straightened up, pale with emotion.

"You wretch!" said she bitterly. "Whatever led you to do so degrading a thing? Was it merely to be revenged on your family?"

But if Mrs. Doremus had laid aside her mask, so also had Dobbs. The obsequiousness of the butler had fallen from his shoulders, and he stood forth

in his true character, easy, insouciant, and politely indifferent.

"Not a bit of it, Cousin Elsa," said he. "Quite the reverse, in fact. I had to do something, and this was apparently all that I was fitted for. I've done it rather well, don't you think?"

Aline here entered the fray.

"Then Coutts got you this place in order that you might marry one of the Steers girls," said she. "They are just the sort to fall in love with butlers and chauffeurs."

Stuyvesant's face darkened. He bit his lip.

"That was no part of the plan," said he. "You see, Aline, I couldn't really starve, just because your father had stolen all of my money. I came here to earn a living. Sylvia learned of my identity quite by accident."

Mrs. Doremus' anger was slowly gaining in force and volume.

"Why didn't you come to me if you were so destitute?" she demanded. "I would have given you alms rather than have this disgrace on the family name."

"It was the family name that I was trying to protect, Cousin Elsa," said Stuyvesant. "Although I never told Coutts, I had a form of acknowledgment from Cousin Livingstone for the Twenty-second Street property. This antedated the values which he made over to you and Aline. If I had turned it over to Coutts, it would have cut your income by about ten thousand dollars a year. But you see, I knew that you hadn't much besides, and that you would probably have fought the matter. This would have meant that Cousin Livingstone's affairs would all have come out in court. Then the family *would* have got a black eye. Really, it was a case of *noblesse oblige*. It seemed to me much better that one of the family should be an obscure butler than a branded thief."

Aline's face flamed, but Stuyvesant's statement acted as a decided curb on the demeanor of her mother.

"That was rather decent of you, I will say, Neely," she observed. "Where is this paper of which you speak?"

Stuyvesant looked at her with a faint smile of contempt.

"Pray don't be uneasy, my dear cousin," said he. "When the sheriff began to grab all of my pretty Italian things, I got a bit frightened lest I yield to temptation—like your poor husband. So I tore the paper up, and threw it in the fire."

Mrs. Doremus took a long breath of relief, and a tinge of color returned to her waxen cheeks.

"Nonsense!" said she. "I don't believe that there ever was such a paper. If there had been you would have come around and tried to blackmail me."

Stuyvesant's eyes narrowed.

"Permit me to observe," said he, "that blackmail would not have been necessary. Even if I were starving, I would not have asked anything of you—even if there had been the slightest chance of getting it. But as I have already pointed out, I knew that you would have contested the case, and those of us who happen to have been gentlefolk for several centuries have an intense dislike to washing our soiled family linen in public."

"You are insulting, sir," cried Mrs. Doremus.

"If you feel yourself insulted," said Stuyvesant, "it is apparent that the shoe fits."

Mrs. Doremus fell back in her chair, pale and speechless.

"You were always a worthless fellow, Cornelius," she said, "and your masquerading here as a butler shows how lacking you are in any self-respect. We will not bandy words. Now that I know your identity, it makes my duty all the more plain, humiliating though it will be to Aline and myself."

For it had occurred to the worthy lady that, inasmuch as Sylvia Steers knew already the true identity of Dobbs, it was hardly worth while to lend herself longer to the deception. Like a flash, she saw her open course, which was promptly to denounce Dobbs, Alessandro, Mrs. Forrest, and Prudence as impostors introduced to the household by the designing Coutts,

with the idea of some such result as had already befallen.

"This Alessandro," said she icily. "Who and what is he, pray tell?"

"Alessandro," said Stuyvesant, "was my chauffeur before I lost my fortune."

Mrs. Doremus nodded.

"Very well," said she. "That will do. You may go."

Stuyvesant hesitated.

"I hope, Cousin Elsa," said he, "that in consideration of the personal sacrifice that I have made, to avoid all scandal, you will be so good as to preserve my incognito."

"And why, pray? Do you want to make me a party to your shameful behavior in deceiving Mr. Steers?"

Stuyvesant colored.

"I am deeply in love with Miss Steers," he announced, "and she has said that she cares for me. I intend to give up my situation here at once, and find some better employment. Then, in time, if I am successful, I mean to ask Mr. Steers for the hand of his daughter in marriage."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Doremus sneeringly. "But you have just admitted that you are fit for nothing better than a butler."

Aline spoke up pertly.

"If you were able to do anything else," she asked, "why did you take this position with the Steers?" She gave a frosty smile. "It is really plain enough. It was all a put-up job between Coutts and yourself that you were to come here as butler. Then, after managing to interest Sylvia, to coyly allow her to discover that you are really a tremendous swell, in circumstances romantically destitute. No doubt you picked out Alessandro to secure Pauline, or it may have been the other way about, while Lady Forrest—"

"Lady who?" cried Dobbs sharply.

"Lady Forrest," snapped Mrs. Doremus. "Now, don't pretend that you didn't know who she was. I never knew of a straighter case of conspiracy. It is all quite plain to me, and I am sure that it will be plain to Mr. Steers, also."

Her last words appeared to have been lost on Stuyvesant.

"Lady Forrest," he muttered. "So *that's* who she is."

"As I remarked before," said Mrs. Doremus, "that is all. You may go."

With a slight bow, Stuyvesant moved to the door, and went out. Mrs. Doremus touched the bell, which was immediately answered by Prudence.

"Find Mr. Steers," said Mrs. Doremus, "and tell him that I would like to see him at once, on a matter of the most pressing importance."

"Yes, Mrs. Doremus," answered Prudence, and went out.

Mr. Steers was in the lower hall, and came up immediately in response to Mrs. Doremus' message, which the genial host took to have some bearing on the delinquent Payne.

"Well, well," said he, as his eye rested on Aline. "Glad to see you chirpin' up a bit, Miss Aline. After all, there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught, and I'll bet that Sam is the one who is doin' the mopin' just now." He glanced at Mrs. Doremus, and at the sight of this lady his brows knit. "What's up?" he asked. "Nothin' very bad, I hope."

For Mrs. Doremus had taken advantage of the few preceding moments to apply with haste, and rather less than her usual skill, sundry dabs of artificial youth, the effect of which her agitated condition, rendered particularly ghastly.

"My dear Mr. Steers," said she, "I have sent for you not in regard to this wretched Payne, but for a matter much more vital to yourself."

"What's that? What's that?" Steers exclaimed.

"The trouble which has come to my daughter," said Mrs. Doremus, "and certain unhappiness which threatens your own two charming girls are, it appears, all the result of the dishonorable behavior of one man. Tell me, Mr. Steers, how long have you known this lawyer, Coutts?"

"Oh, I've had dealin's of a business sort with him for some years," replied the mystified Steers. "I never knew

him personally till last autumn, when I came to get this place. Why so?"

"Because," said Mrs. Doremus, speaking slowly and with care, "I have just discovered that he has perpetrated upon you a vile and contemptible conspiracy."

"Sho!" cried Steers. "What do you mean?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Doremus, "you cannot be aware of the fact, but it seems that the domestic servants secured for you by Coutts are not at all what you think them. They are a band of impostors, who have taken their positions here for reasons best known to themselves and this intriguing Coutts."

Mr. Steers stared at her for a brief instant.

"What?" he said; then added almost soothingly: "There, there, Mrs. Doremus. Who's been rilin' you now?"

Mrs. Doremus waved her hand.

"Let me tell you who these people really are," said she, "and then you may verify the matter for yourself. To begin with, Mrs. Forrest is none other than *Lady Forrest*, the widow of a rake of an English baronet, who was killed in a hunting accident some years ago and left her quite penniless. She has been over here before, and is rather better known for her gayety than for her discretion. I have heard it said that she was an old flame of Coutts, and I believe that there was some scandal, but of that I know nothing."

Steers' indulgent expression had faded. His stern face was set like a rock, and his eyes were like gimlets of blued steel.

"Prudence," continued Mrs. Doremus, "is an English country girl, picked up somewhere by Lady Forrest, and brought over here to find her fortune, which is more apt to be made, I fancy, by her face and figure than by her attainments. We crossed on the same steamer, but before we came here we were requested by Coutts, through Mr. Payne, to say nothing about the identity of these two women."

Steers' black eyebrows drew a heavy, straight line over his piercing eyes. He did not interrupt.

"Dobbs," continued Mrs. Doremus, warming to her work, "is a scapegrace distant connection of our own, who has been all of his life an idler and ne'er-do-weel, and finally lost his fortune in some silly venture with my poor late husband, who was anything but a man of affairs. It was through recognizing him that I have been convinced of the truth of my previous suspicions. Alessandro is some Italian adventurer, doubtless a renegade or deserter from the Italian army. He was my relative's chauffeur before he frittered away his fortune."

She paused, and Steers regarded her grimly. He was a man who owed most of his success in life to a quick and accurate judgment of human nature, and this faculty had seldom failed him. In his later life he had trained himself to think quickly and finally before committing himself to any speech or action.

"Well," said he, and his genial voice, while still holding its drawl, had assumed a certain metallic quality. "That may be all true."

"Surely," cried Mrs. Doremus, who was getting the pleasure of a veteran player in the contemplation of the high cards held back in her hand, "you don't doubt my word, Mr. Steers?"

"Not at all, not at all. Only, it strikes me that while all this may be quite true, at the same time I can't see where there's been any real harm done."

Mrs. Doremus leaned forward with a gleam in her eye and an actual flush fighting hard to distribute itself according to the same color scheme which had been already applied.

"Perhaps," said she, "you may think differently when I tell you that this afternoon, on going down to the garage to consult your chauffeur about a motor which I think of purchasing, I narrowly escaped intruding upon a very heated love passage between this rascally Italian and your daughter Pauline."

"What?" Steers' voice was like the snarl of a grizzly, and he started forward with such violence that his chair gave a protesting whine. "What's that? Do you mean to say that this

ornery dago has been making love to my Pauline?"

His face, at this moment, if seen anywhere but in a lady's boudoir, would have inspired the observer to reach for some weapon of defense. But Mrs. Doremus stood valiantly to her guns.

"I heard him kissing her," said she.

Steers' face was homicidal. A pale fury streamed from his blue eyes, and deep gashes cut themselves the length of his lean cheeks. With a tremendous effort, he restrained himself.

"Go on," said he; "what then?"

"I did not interrupt," said Mrs. Doremus, "as I wished first to refer the matter to you. I returned to the house, when, on going into the dining room to get a glass of water, I was again shocked to overhear, from the pantry, another love passage between your daughter Sylvia and my worthless kinsman."

"Jee-rusalem!" snarled Steers, and sprang to his feet.

His face was wild, and the whole, tense figure breathed death and destruction. But halfway to the door he got himself in hand. He paused. There was nothing irresolute in this action. Rather, it told of a tremendous self-control. He glanced quickly from Mrs. Doremus to the door.

"What are you thinking of doing?" asked Mrs. Doremus.

Steers gave a bleak smile.

"I was goin' to start right in and clean house," said he, "but I guess that can wait a few minutes. This ain't Texas. I reckon I'll have a talk with Coutts before gettin' on my war paint. P'r'aps you'd like to have him come here?"

Mrs. Doremus reflected a moment. She had no intention that there should be any interview in which she should not participate. She had hoped that Steers would be guided by her own advice in dealing with the situation, but the merest glance at his face showed that there was not the slightest chance of his being influenced by any counsel but his own. Mrs. Doremus' trim figure stiffened.

"Since you insist on talking with

Coutts," said she, "I would much prefer that you do so in my presence. He will at once know by whom these accusations are made, and, as I have accused him of duplicity, I am quite ready to repeat these charges to his face."

"Oh, just as you like, just as you like," said Steers. "There ain't goin' to be any hair lost. I don't really believe that Coutts meant anythin' tricky. These people might have been friends of his in hard luck, or somethin'." He glanced at Aline. "Perhaps your daughter might want to go in the other room," said he.

Aline acted on this hint. She was by this time thoroughly scared at the tempest stirred up, and had no wish to be further involved, wherefore she departed silently and with less than her usual haughty manner. Steers touched the bell, and the door was opened by Prudence.

"Ask Mr. Coutts to come up here," said Steers. "You'll find him in the office."

A moment later Coutts entered. His first observing glance told him in a measure what was afoot, but if Mrs. Doremus looked for any evidence of conscious guilt she was disappointed. As for Steers, his first outburst over, he had gained that complete control of face and manner which many years of the game had taught him. For all that one could see, he might have been tranquilly presiding at the trial by lynch law of a murderer or horse thief.

"Mr. Coutts," said he, "I want to ask you a few questions about the help if you don't mind. Now, to begin with, what do you know about that Italian chaffure, Alessandro?"

Coutts smiled.

"When I engaged him for you," said he, "Alessandro was a gentleman of good family but no fortune, who had come to this country to earn his living. He was for three years the chauffeur of Mrs. Doremus' cousin. But in the last few days, owing to the death of a cousin of Alessandro's, his circumstances have undergone a change. At the present moment, he is the titled head of one of the oldest and noblest of

Italian families. Alessandro is the Count Alessandro di Monterubbiano, heir to the title, palace, and estates, and has the entrée to every court in Europe."

Mrs. Doremus fell back in her chair. Steers leaned forward, breathing hard through his nose.

"The Count di Monterubbiano," said Coutts, "came to me this morning, and told me of his change of estate, but he asked me to say nothing about it to his employer. He wished to make the announcement himself, and at the same time to ask for the hand of Miss Pauline in marriage."

Steers' lean jaw dropped. He swallowed once or twice, then tugged viciously at his black, wiry mustache.

"So far, so good," said he dryly. "Now, then, who and what is this man Dobbs?"

"Dobbs' real name," said Coutts, "is Cornelius Calvert Doremus Stuyvesant."

"Gosh!" muttered Steers.

"Stuyvesant was a cousin of the late Livingstone Doremus," Coutts continued blandly. "Stuyvesant recently lost his entire fortune of about half a million through improper administration of his estate, and was obliged to go through bankruptcy. Mr. Stuyvesant comes of one of the best and oldest of American families, and preferred to take his loss rather than take the matter into court. He came to me quite destitute. All that stood between him and starvation was the little which his former chauffeur, Alessandro, managed to make as a taxi driver, and which he insisted on sharing with his late employer."

Steers tugged a few bristles from the other end of his mustache.

"Stuyvesant had to do something," Coutts continued, "and in his crushed and hopeless condition was quite indifferent as to the character of his employment, as long as it was clean and honest. For the sake of his family, he took a different name when he came here to serve as butler, also making certain changes in his personal appearance."

Steers was silent for a moment. As for Mrs. Doremus, the revelations regarding Alessandro had left her pale and speechless.

"Why didn't you tell me all this?" at last asked Steers slowly.

"For the simple reason," said Coutts, "that you never asked me. You were content with my assurance that your servants were honest, respectable, and efficient. The count and Stuyvesant naturally preferred that their true identities should not be known if it could be avoided. Now, as for Mrs. Forrest—"

But Steers rose to his feet, and stood, severe and grim.

"I guess we'll leave Mrs. Forrest out of the round-up," said he, in his most metallic voice. "Anybody can see, first shot, that there ain't a sweeter and more honest woman in the world."

CHAPTER XII.

The accomplished grace with which Mrs. Doremus and her fair daughter Aline made their departure from Grey-side shortly after the "exposure" of the domestic corps would have furnished an object lesson for a Japanese diplomat. Pauline and Sylvia had been kept in ignorance of Mrs. Doremus' part in the affair, nor had any other members of the household been enlightened in regard to what had come to pass.

Alessandro had presented himself to Mr. Steers, respectfully informed him of his change of condition, and requested the hand of Pauline, all with a frankness and simplicity which quite overcame any lingering antipathy which the millionaire might have cherished from his Texas days for the Latin race.

"I guess you hit the nail on the head, Coutts," said Steers, "when you stated that a gentleman is a gentleman, whether he's greaser, Yank, dago, or Chink. Alessandro is the real thing. He's off for Washington to-night to see his ambassador, and the wedding's fixed for next month. You see, he's got to get back to Italy, and Pauline won't wait."

Mr. Stuyvesant found his position a little more difficult. Immediately after the interview with Mrs. Doremus, Steers led Coutts into his private office, lighted a huge, black cigar, and rang for his butler.

Mr. Stuyvesant entered with a quiet but respectful dignity which commended itself at once to the generous-minded Steers.

"Mr. Stuyvesant," said he, "there's been a general show-down in this house. Mr. Coutts has told me of the circumstances which led you to take your position as butler in my house. There's nothin' in all that to count against you, so far as I know. But what I want you to tell me now, as man to man, is how far this foolishness with my daughter has gone. Shut the door and sit down, and let's have a plain, honest talk."

Stuyvesant, rather embarrassed, did as he was told.

"Miss Steers suspected me from the first as a person who had not always been a butler," said he. "I think that she pumped Prudence a bit, and heard about some of our discussions downstairs. You see, very often Mrs. Forrest and Alessandro and I used to get a bit lofty in our arguments: comparative beauty of French and Italian renaissance, or the different furniture periods, and what defined 'em."

Steers looked rather dazed. "M'h'm!" he grunted, puffing at his cigar.

"Some of this got to Miss Steers, I fancy," said Stuyvesant. "Having been an artist and made a study of all this kind of rot, I may have got to lecturin' a bit. Then, a few days ago, I left an old bill lying on a shelf in the pantry, and Miss Steers found it, and wanted to know all about it. You see, it was from a poor devil of a paint dealer who couldn't afford to be stung, so I wanted to pay him."

"H'm," grunted Steers, rolling his cigar; "then if he'd been a mite better off, he might ha' got stung?"

Stuyvesant colored.

"Most of those old accounts were settled by the bankruptcy court," he said, "but I knew this man was hard

up, so I meant to pay him out of my wages here. Miss Sylvia asked me point-blank if I were Stuyvesant. I owned up—and——"

"Go ahead," said Steers encouragingly.

"She—was very sympathetic. Then, the first thing I knew, I found that I was—er——"

"Keeping the dinner waiting," said Steers. "Then what?"

"Then I asked her if she would wait for me if I cleared out and made good at something worth while. She said that she would."

Stuyvesant paused, much embarrassed. Steers smoked, and regarded the young man thoughtfully.

"Why didn't you tackle something worth while to begin with, instead of butlerizing?" he asked.

Stuyvesant met the keen blue eyes steadily.

"To tell the truth," said he, "I didn't care. I was too much knocked in a heap for it to matter two sous what I did."

Steers nodded.

"Well," said he, "for a man to bog down from half a million to a bunch of old debts might make him feel a mite indifferent. Especially if he'd never hit a lick of work in all his life. But do you think that you could make good, now?"

"Yes," said Stuyvesant. "I could."

"How so?"

"Because," said Stuyvesant slowly, "in the first place, this butler job has taught me that I actually could do something well. I never would have guessed it before. But it's my idea that, if a chap can do anything really well, there's no reason why he shouldn't be able to do something else equally well, or even better. But the chief reason is, that now, for the first time in my life, I've got a real incentive. I love your daughter, Mr. Steers, and I appreciate her, too. I never knew a woman of her sort before."

Steers bent his black brows upon the young man.

"Look here," said he, "leavin' my daughter Sylvia out of the question,

haven't there been times when you've been sorta 'shamed of bein' a flunky like?"

Stuyvesant made a strongly negative gesture.

"No, sir," said he, "there have not. There have been moments, though, when I've been rather proud to have done the work as it should be done—such as the dinner you gave a month or so ago, and the lawn party for Miss Steers' birthday. Let me tell you something; whenever you find a servant who does grudgingly what he could do well, it's because the fellow thinks himself too good for his job, and only keeps it because he hasn't it in him to do something better. He's a lower-class snob, which is just as bad as an upper-class one, and his conceit of himself is in excess of his ability. On the other hand, when you find a servant that really is a good servant, then, perhaps, he is too good for his job. So long as a man respects himself, he's entitled to the respect of everybody else. No, sir; I'm not ashamed of having been a butler. It's done me a lot of good."

Steers surveyed him critically.

"I reckon it has," said he, in his dry voice; then, as though to change the subject, added: "How did you come to lose your money, Stuyvesant?"

The younger man shrugged.

"It was unfortunately invested by a relative," he said. "I was so careless as to let things slide, and have got only myself to blame. I have no kick coming."

For several moments Mr. Steers smoked in silence. But his mind was not inactive. His shrewd judgment told him that here was a gentleman, if ever he had known one, and more than that a man of courage, principle, and self-respect. The little incident of the bill to be settled with the poor paint dealer touched and pleased him.

"Well," he drawled finally, "I guess you're right. As you said a minute or two ago, a man that can do any one thing well ain't altogether worthless. I guess"—he turned to Coutts—"with all the interests we got, we can find some-

thing for Stuyvesant to do which ought to give him a fair start."

"Undoubtedly," said Coutts, who, as a student of human nature, was deeply enjoying himself.

Steers turned abruptly to Stuyvesant. "Now, look-a-here," said he. "I'll stake you myself, and start you goin'. If in a year or so from now you have managed to make good, then come around and we'll have another talk about my little girl. Meanwhile, you'd better chuck this job, right off. I reckon there'll be a few changes in this house durin' the next twenty-four hours. Coutts says he's got to go to New York to-morrow, and you'd best go with him. I've got to run in myself in a couple of days, and then we'll meet and see what we can do. And now, seein' as you're still on the job, suppose you go out and mix us up a good Martini. Three of 'em," he added, with his dry smile.

A large harvest moon, absolutely round and apparently filled to bursting with a rich and mellow substance whereof the texture suggested honey, was lifting itself toward a fathomless dome in which the stars were being suppressed. The remote sea was sleeping peacefully, and her soft breathing could be heard along the shore.

Mr. Steers, with the assistance of Lady Forrest, was appreciating the calm beauty of the night from the end of the long veranda. Yet it is doubtful if the mind of this gentleman reflected the restful environment of moon, and sky, and sea.

"Do you think," he asked, in a voice unwontedly timid for one of his strenuous past, "that it takes three generations to make a gentleman?"

"Many more than that have failed in some cases," she answered gently, "while in others the fraction of a generation has been enough."

"Well," sighed Steers, "I reckon I'll have to take a chance with the others. So far as I've been able to study it out, most of my ancestors were more at home in buckskin, moccasins, and astride a horse than in a rig like this."

He glanced down at his perfectly well-fitting dinner costume. "My father's father crossed the mountains from Virginia with a rifle across his shoulder, and most of us have packed guns of some sort ever since." He gave his short laugh. "Twenty years ago when I was a shoutin' maverick, I'd have let daylight through any man that allowed I wasn't a gentleman, horns, hoofs, and hide. But now," he added reflectively, "I'm inclined to think that any such act on my part would ha' been unjustifiable homicide."

"If to be a gentleman," said Mrs. Forrest softly, "is to be generous and true-hearted, 'without fear and without reproach,' then you have no cause to complain."

"Oh, it ain't that I'm kicking. Only, sometimes I get a mite discouraged about myself. It don't seem to me, here in the East, as if I was quite up to my station in life." He looked thoughtfully at her winsome face, pale in the moonlight, with its dark fringe of hair. "I feel it most when I'm talkin' to you," said he shortly.

Mrs. Forrest looked up at him questioningly.

"That does not sound very kind," said she.

"I don't mean it like that. Only you have got so much style and finish that alongside you I'm like a Duluth ore boat by the side of a lovely, trim yacht."

His voice held a note of pathos. Some sympathetic quality in the strong, masterful personality helped this wistful tone on its way to Mrs. Forrest's heart. Steers' splendid profile was against the moonlit sky, the half of his face toward her in the shadow. Yet the dejection in mouth and eyes was quite apparent.

"I'm sort o' blue to-night," he confessed, "the thought of my little girl leavin' me, I reckon. Pauline will be married and away in another six weeks, and Sylvia is fightin' like a good un to get me to cut down that two years to two months. She'll win out, like as not. If she don't, it'll be the first time she ever missed havin' her own way with her dad. Then I'll be all alone."

But it's all right. I like that man, Stuyvesant. He's the real thing—an A-one, simon-pure gentleman, and more than three generations to the makin' of him."

"Why do you lay such stress on that?" asked Mrs. Forrest.

Steers turned to her with his eager, intent scrutiny.

"Do you really want to know?" he asked.

Mrs. Forrest's heart whirled off like a frightened partridge. For the moment she felt like a girl of eighteen, fencing to parry the speech which she longed, yet feared, to hear. Vaguely she felt it coming, and the poise which was her second nature suddenly forsook her. Confused, she turned away her head.

"Does it really interest you?" asked Steers, in his deep, vibrant voice.

"I—of course. I am deeply interested in what concerns you," she managed to say.

"Then I'll tell you," Steers answered quietly. "It is because I want *you* so much. No man living could want a woman more. I want you to marry me, but when I come to look at the difference between us, it seems somehow wrong."

Mrs. Forrest laid her hand upon his sleeve.

"It is not wrong if you really love me," she said, "*for I love you.*"

Mr. Samuel Payne was entertaining a party of guests; Mr. and Mrs. William P. Steers, the Count and Countess di Monterubbiano, and Miss Prudence Eykyn.

Payne, despite his wholesome country life, was again in danger of becoming the victim of his nerves, this deplorable condition in large measure due to the propinquity of two couples who found it absolutely necessary to be always in the closest touch. Even the well-trained French servants, accustomed to, and like all of their race, highly approving, the demonstrations of affection which we Anglo-Saxons see fit to hide, found it necessary to do an unwonted amount of coughing and scuffling on their entrance to a room,

while the housemaids wore sympathetic smiles which absolutely refused to come off.

Mindful of their dignity, Mrs. Steers and her handsome and distinguished-looking husband were more discreet in their expressions of mutual regard. But the Conte and Contessa di Monterubbiano were less considerate of others.

"Alessandro," said Payne snappishly, "you are positively revolting. Your bride does not act as though she wanted to get away. Can't you let go of her hand long enough to drink your coffee? That's right! Spill it all over her trousseau." He sighed, and turned to Prudence. "You and I had better wear blinders and a bell," said he.

"I cannot help it," sighed Alessandro. "Wait until it happens to you."

"The trouble was," said Payne dryly, "I did not wait. Thank Heaven," he said to Steers, "that Stuyvesant and his wife are not here. I would have to go out, and bite large chunks from the tires of the car. What do you hear from them?" he added.

"They are radiantly happy," said Mrs. Steers.

"Cornele is all right," said Mr. Steers, taking a cigar. "I've put him in charge of our new infant food company. He told me that he liked food and liked infants, so he ought to make out all right. Besides, Sylvia's just the girl to keep him hustling. Says she won't take a cent that Stuyvesant doesn't earn." He winked at Payne. "I'll fix that when they've licked a little of the paint off," said he.

"He ees a fine chap, Meester Stuyvesant," said Alessandro eagerly. "When I was starving, he treats me like a brother. Next to my wife, I love him more than any person in zis world. And he is proud. When he was bankrupted, he would take from nobody but me. I have seen his friends try to give him money. Nevaire! He talks bad of himself, but it is not so. He has the heart of pure gold, like my sweetheart."

"Come," snapped Payne to Prudence. "Let's get out of this. Come

into the garden and work the pump while I hold my head under the spout."

Prudence laughed, and the two made good their escape from the salon and out of the front door, where they were greeted by squeals of rapture from a brace of cocker spaniels, sunning themselves on the stone steps. It was late in October, unusually mild for the season, and the charming French landscape was bathed in a soft, delicious haze. From the wooded *chasse* which encircled the house on three sides came autumn odors of leaf and mold with the fragrance of spicy smoke where the gardeners were burning the leaves raked from the lawns, still vividly green. In front of the château the ground fell gently away to the river valley, and in the distance one caught the golden gleam of the river, and the soft grays and reds of a little hamlet, conspicuous for its stone-arched bridge and an ancient mill.

Payne's château, which was really no more than a comfortable French country house, receiving its stately designation because it happened to be the largest place in the immediate neighborhood, had been thoroughly modernized by its late owner, a wealthy manufacturer of chocolate. The house was situated on the higher ground above a tributary of the Seine, and it was toward this little stream that Payne directed their steps.

"Would you like to row?" he asked the girl. "I've got a skiff down here in the boathouse."

"That *would* be nice," cried Prudence. "I'm dying for some good, brisk exercise."

"Being English," said Payne, "that is to be expected. I will steer."

"You won't get seasick?"

"Not with you. You are my antidote for that evil."

He sighed. It was in his mind that this pretty, wholesome English girl would be an effective antidote for most of the ills to which he had recently been subject, the most oppressive of these being the strong but vague desire for some lacking quality in his existence impossible to define. This unfilled

want had been giving the young man many oppressive hours, and on reflection he discovered that it had had its source at about the time of his leaving France for America.

At first he had thought that Aline might be responsible, but a careful analysis of his emotions convinced him that of all persons whom he wished the least to see or hear about, his late fiancée ranked first on the list—excepting always her mother. But there was surely something wrong when he was no longer able to content himself with shooting, motoring, his dogs and horses, and the administration of his country place.

Payne had about come to the conclusion that his taste for the peace and quiet of French provincial life had been disordered by his recent glimpse of the strenuous conditions of his native land.

But, as he and Prudence strolled down the winding path which led to the river, Payne was suddenly conscious of a deep and encompassing content. It was not, however, until they had stepped aboard the skiff, the spaniels tumbling in after them, and Prudence had slipped off her jacket, rolled the sleeves back from her dimpled elbows, and picked up the light oars, that Payne's vague and abstract desires began to gather concrete form.

He gathered up the yoke lines, leaned back against the stern transom, and watched her. Prudence pulled along with strong and balanced strokes. Her eyes met his, and she flashed him a bright smile, but did not speak. Scarcely any words had been said since they had reached the stream, nor was there any need of speech. Both were happy in their companionship and surroundings.

There was no occasion to chatter. The little shallop glided smoothly and swiftly on the pale-green water which is characteristic of the streams in France. The spaniels sighted a *poule d'eau* under the rushes, and splashed overboard in chase, thereafter spattering along the reedy banks.

Payne and Prudence looked at each other, and smiled.

Some distance downstream, Payne glanced at his watch, and sighed.

"We must be turning back," said he regretfully. "I told Steers that we would try the partridges this afternoon."

Prudence nodded, then backed vigorously with one oar, pulling on the other. Her face was deliciously flushed, her red lips were parted, and her bright hair seemed to have gathered the reflected tints of the autumn foliage. She had loosened her collar, and her round throat was like cream.

"You don't mind if I make no effort to entertain you?" asked Payne.

"How absurd! I am always happy when—on the river," she finished, in a slightly breathless tone, which might, or might not, have been the result of exercise.

But the telltale color heightened the rich tint of her cheeks. Payne's keen eyes observed it, and suddenly their deeper vision cleared. The hour had struck. The rosy but invisible little god who is wont to chaperon such parties whispered something in his ear. His heart raced off tumultuously, and the glow on the girl's face was reflected in his own. In that instant, Payne awoke to a knowledge of what he really wanted. And he wanted it so badly that for the moment he was in grave danger of upsetting the boat. But with a herculean effort he managed to sit still, waiting until he should feel the solid ground beneath his feet.

Perhaps Prudence understood, for her stroke became a little faltering, the high color fled, and there was an almost frightened look in her eyes. She glanced from bank to bank as though looking instinctively for the avenue of escape which there was not the slightest

chance of her finding. This is the primitive emotion of the maid at the first glimpse of masterful design in the eyes of the conquering male. Payne saw it, and his usually cold eyes were lit by hot fires. Each knew, in that moment, that the other knew. There was not the slightest need for spoken words.

Nevertheless, when they reached the landing, and Payne, pale and silent, helped her out, words came, and in a flood that swept away the last, lingering hold that Prudence had upon her conscious actions. Before she realized it, her bare arms were about the neck of the man whom she had loved, almost at first sight, and for whom she had suffered hopelessly her life "downstairs." Words that she had never dreamed she could utter rushed joyously from her quivering lips, while the boat drifted off unheeded to be caught by the swaying reeds, and the spaniels barked joyously and chased water hens up and down the stream.

"The true secret of happiness," said Payne, as an epilogue to certain exercises, which, although the same in all civilized languages, have never yet been properly interpreted upon the printed page, "is, first, to know what one wants."

"And the second?" asked Prudence, demure as only an English girl can be.

"The second," said Payne, "is to get it. There is also a third."

Prudence blushed furiously, then gathered courage to ask what that might be.

"The third," said Payne, "is to keep on getting it."

And he proceeded to prove, to the satisfaction of two people, that this view was no sophistry.

A DRINKING SONG

WINE comes in at the mouth,
And love comes in at the eye;
That's all we shall know for truth
Before we grow old and die.
I lift the glass to my mouth,
I look at you, and I sigh.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS.

Debtor to the Wise

By
MARGARETTA TUTTLE



GARDINER was with Wade when it happened, or it might have been much worse. Wade turned his new car into the park behind a girl who was riding a horse she was evidently watching closely.

"That looks like Clany's horse," said Gardiner.

Wade throttled his engine down as the horse shied at the sound of the "cut-off" of the motor behind him.

"It looks like Rose Madeson," said Wade, his eyes on the blond hair tied low under the smart riding hat.

"Clany evidently doesn't mind if his fiancée gets a broken arm," said Gardiner. "No woman ought to be allowed to ride that horse."

"God!" said Wade, his hand flying to his emergency brake.

Both men were in the road instantly, but it was Wade whose hand tightened like iron on the curb of the plunging horse. For a moment it looked to those who came running from the benches and lawns as if Wade and the girl would both be killed. Then, somehow, Gardiner held the girl by the arm; the horse was far down the road, and Wade lay on the ground, white and limp.

Wade did not take kindly to the captivity that followed. On the morning Gardiner permitted him to leave his bed he moved with nervous distaste from leather chair to cushioned couch, and then back to the chair.

Gardiner watched him, proffering ex-

cellent explanations for his prohibitions and listening with admirable patience to the new and evil-sounding epithets Wade attached to the explanations.

"You need a psychologist, Wade," said Gardiner at length. "You have something on your mind."

"I need a smoke," said Wade. "And no man ought to be a doctor in these days who is not a psychologist. We use it to sell our steel. One would think you doctors might use it to mix your prescriptions."

"I'm not prescribing anything more than plain common sense for you, Wade. You cannot expect to feel yourself again in three or four weeks. You are lucky to be as well as you are. If you had been in the habit of pouring alcohol into your blood you'd be in bed yet."

Wade scowled out of the high window of his apartment.

"Brian," he said, "does it sound like common sense to you that I am losing more than I can afford by staying out of my office all this time? I tell you, Clany will get that thieving contract through while I am sitting up here pretending that I have been half killed by his own horse. And it does not need a brain specialist to find a reason for my wanting to smoke. My arm is out of the plaster, and nothing ails me now but my unsteady feet. The trouble about having an old friend for a doctor is that he thinks he has to be your father and your mother and your old nurse from the country."

"Do you want the nurse to come in and put your pipe in your mouth, and light it for you every time it goes out? Your fingers are about as unsteady as your feet."

"No, I don't want the nurse hanging around at all—any more than she has to. I can work my pipe all right and my brains, too, if you will kindly arrange for me to get out."

"A nice mess you'd make of your work. You leave it to the office. You can smoke in a day or two, and send for your stenographers as soon as your temperature behaves a little better. Why can't you have a little patience? Consider how fortunate it was for Miss Rose that you were there."

"Fortunate? It was my machine that frightened the fool beast."

"If it had not been yours it would have been another, and Miss Rose is to be married in three weeks. Her mother told me this morning that her cards go out to-morrow. Clany has sold the horse."

Wade leaned back against a pillow, and surrounded Clany's name with a circle of obloquy staggering even to the doctor's seasoned ears.

"You certainly are recovering," said the doctor.

"He's a scoundrel, and you know it," Wade continued. "Only last month he offered me a percentage of his rotten thievery to put in girders in the Fortieth Street viaduct that in two years would have let the whole thing down into the bottoms. If we could put some of the time into our work that we have to spend fighting Clany to keep from building paper bridges that, so they increase his graft, can fall and kill half the town for all he cares, we could get ahead. And that is the man that girl is going to marry, and that I ought to be thankful I preserved her to marry!"

"Why, you have known that girl all her life. You know it is an outrage that she should be permitted to marry Clany. You know if there were any men in her family they would make short work of such a marriage. But a stepmother absorbed in her own social recognition, to the exclusion of every-

thing else, and a girl who knows next to nothing about men, and would believe nothing but the idealism of her convent days—what chance has the girl?"

The doctor groped with sudden enlightenment. This was the girl whom Wade himself had come near marrying a couple of years ago. That he had not thought of her sooner, when searching for some other reason for his patient's gusty temper than the discomfort of his recovery, occurred to Gardiner as a stupidity.

But it had been his experience that men like Wade, who had a man's work to do, threw off with remarkable ease all effects of a love affair that came to nothing. Gardiner had found them ready to interest themselves in the next woman before the first one had succeeded in drying her eyes, and he emphatically agreed with whoever wrote Shakespeare that men had died, but not for love, though he suspected it of greater depredation among women.

Wade was particularly the level-headed kind of man one would not suppose— And then Gardiner took a new grip on a very old truth. You may predicate many things about level-headed men, but the effect some particular woman will have on them you cannot predicate.

"She is quite a girl," said Gardiner aloud. "Like her father—the same long eyes. It is a pity that if her father had to die he did not put off marrying again. This second wife had only been married to him a few months when he died, and I suppose there never was a woman less competent to bring up a young girl she scarcely knew. I do not think Miss Rose has been very happy at home—yet I cannot believe marriage to Clany will make her any happier."

"You are their physician. You were also her father's friend. Why do you not put a stop to it?"

"Neither position carries enough influence to stop an arranged marriage. I spoke to Mrs. Madeson about Clany once. I might as well have kept still. And I cannot go to the girl with the truth about Clany."

"Why not?"

"Because she is a girl. You cannot do such things."

"Because she is a girl you cannot tell her a few hard truths. But you can let her marry the subject of these truths and find them out for herself when it is too late. That is a pretty piece of cowardice! Who, please, cannot do such things? Any decent man could, and would, as surely as he would step between any woman and a blow."

"She would not believe me."

"There are proofs."

"Put it to yourself, Wade. Why have you not told her yourself? Since it appears that there is nobody in her own family to do her this service, you are an old friend—and she has been engaged to Clany several months."

Wade shook his head.

"I have not spoken to her for two years. She—she might listen to me. Friendship is an elastic thing—ours may have survived the silence she imposed on it. But I honestly believed she would break off her engagement to Clany herself. I did not think it could last."

Gardiner looked out of the window.

"I recall she was once—was it really engaged to you? It takes a good bit of courage to break off the second engagement. And Clany is clever. He has also the tremendous advantage of a pretty large experience with women. Not women like this girl; but the colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady are as much sisters under their skin as they ever were. He has built her a house, and made her select the furnishings. It's nothing to Clany. There are a half dozen women he could install in the house if Miss Rose failed him, but she does not know this, and that house and all the money Clany has put into it would hold her to her promise as much as another girl's preference."

"It is evidently a case for outside interference. Brian, will you not try speaking to her?"

"I tell you," said the doctor, "you cannot do these things. You yourself could not speak ill of Clany to the girl who is going to marry him. She would not permit the second word."

Wade paused.

"Unless she is much changed in the last two years, I could speak to her. But I cannot get there to-day—and tomorrow—I tell you, Brian, it has got to be done. Think of the girl's father, the one man who stood, against the biggest odds a man ever fought, for decency in his city—and shot down like a dog for his fight. You cannot think of this man's daughter marrying Clany. Her father was your old friend. It is such things as this that make the need of fathers stand out. If you were tied down in a grave while Clany married your daughter, what would you do? Yes, and what would you think of such poor friends as you had who, knowing you were held from coming to your daughter's help by a few tons of earth heaped on you by the help of such men as Clany, stood by and said they could do nothing? Order me a cab, and let me see what I can do. If the girl will not listen to me, Clany can be made to."

Two vivid red spots settled on Wade's cheeks, and even in the doctor's face a glow seemed rising. But he shook his head.

"You cannot go," he said. "Perhaps — Has Miss Rose herself never inquired after you? It would be the natural thing for her to do, even if her stepmother does watch her like a hawk."

"All inquiries have been made by the older woman."

The doctor rose.

"Give me a couple of hours," he said. "There is no real reason why she should not come to you. You have a woman nurse here—and you are kept here on her account." He reflected a moment. "But I shall have to get her away from the other woman—and I may have to — Ah, well, you are quite ill enough to merit any woman's anxiety. If I do this, will you promise me to stay in that chair?"

"Yes."

Wade heard the doctor in low-toned conversation with the nurse in the next room, and then the closing of the outer door. He leaned back in his chair, closing his eyes and husbanding his strength. Gradually the red spots on his cheek-

bones faded. At the end of an hour the white-capped nurse brought milk, hesitated over his closed eyelids, and then, seeing that he was not sleeping, waited for him to drink it, and went out again.

As the minutes of the second hour passed, Wade took a small package of papers from his pocket and examined them until there fell on his strained ear the voice of one woman speaking to another in the room beyond him. He put the papers away with steady fingers. The door opened and closed softly, and there fell on his ears the sound of hurried breathing. He turned his head.

It was she. She faltered at the door a moment, and then came toward him with eyes whose gray seemed to deepen and darken as they rested on him. He held out his left hand in silence. She did not take it, but stood before him, filling her eyes with him, a girlish, hesitating figure that yet was proudly poised.

"I came to thank you myself," she murmured, at length. "You have saved me from frightful injury; but it seems at almost too great a price—when I see you this way."

"It is no matter," he said gravely. "You must know how glad I am to have been of use to you; and I am a much better victim. I am not going to be married next week."

She stirred rebelliously.

"Who takes care of you—the nurse I met coming in?"

"I have had several nurses. Did you come alone?"

Her lids drooped at the question. Then suddenly the whole woman woke into passionate yearning.

"Yes. I had to come. They told me—" Her voice broke. "It was horrible. I could not endure it another minute."

In his surprise he did not answer for some seconds. Then, leaning forward, he put out his unhurt hand and drew her into the chair the doctor had used.

"I wonder if you know how many months I have waited for you?" He saw her hand tremble on the arm of her chair, and he let his voice lighten a little.

"There were many days when I thought I must come back in spite of your prohibition—when mere waiting seemed intolerable. It was such a foolish thing—our quarrel. But in all this long time you had no word for me—until to-day."

Her eyes, with a sharp line between them, were fixed on his bound wrist and crippled fingers. She spoke hesitantly.

"I had no idea you would interpret my moment's pique into a dismissal. It seemed to me you went away so readily—that perhaps you wanted to go. I—I tried—but I—I couldn't. We girls are trained from childhood to do nothing that means forcing ourselves upon a man. We are made to believe that if a man does not come the inference is unescapable that he does not want to come. You men help train us so. If we are so unfortunate as to care for a man who makes no sign of preference for us, there is nothing—literally nothing—that we can do. Save perhaps to forget if we can—or to turn to a man more willing to declare himself—if there is one."

She paused, and Wade looked at her, striving to comprehend a way of living so needlessly sacrificial. All these months, then, that he had found himself unable to return to her without her summoning, he had been making easy the path of a more dominant lover, emphasizing Clany's gift of not recognizing obstacles as a thing her hurt pride craved.

"Oh, Rose! Rose!" he murmured.

She went on speaking.

"What did I know of—love—or even of friendship between men and women? I was utterly unlearned, as only a girl untaught and inexperienced can be. That we liked the same things, and the same books, and the same places, seemed a mere triviality to me. That just to be with you was a pleasure had no deeper significance for me. That you could be so angry and could give no sign—afterward—seemed the great thing. Yet I think that I, too, waited. And perhaps you cannot understand what such waiting is to a girl."

He let a silence fall between them, and presently she made ready to rise.

He put out a detaining hand.

"Rose," he said gently, "give me a moment longer. I am searching for words that do not come easily—and not finding them. Yet I think that I have known you long enough—yes, and well enough—to ask you—to ask you how you, who are your father's daughter, came to meet John Clany?"

She swept him a startled glance.

"My father's wife presented him to me first, I believe. After that I seemed to meet him in many places."

He leaned toward her.

"It seems incredible that your father's wife could proffer this man recognition—let alone courtesy. In that last fight made by your father six years ago against the unspeakable conditions he faced as mayor of the city, it was Clany that he fought—Clany's lies, Clany's treachery. And because of it he died, and the man who shot him still goes unchanged. He has never been found. No one in all the world hated your father as John Clany did. And now, added to all the other shames that he has caused and helped, he plans the crowning one of marrying the daughter who but for what he represents would have her father with her to-day to prevent such an outrage."

The girl's eyes burned steel-gray in her white face.

"How dare you say such things to me? What a vile set of unprovable accusations against a man who, merely because he is a public man, must submit to the loose gossip of every man who happens to dislike him for personal reasons!"

"It is true," said Wade, "that even more than those of other men you are justified in suspecting my motives. Yet, because there is no one else to say these things to you, and all the more because you are—what you are to me—I must run the risk of your misinterpretation."

"John Clany's scoundrelism does not need further proof to many men in his city. It is written in large letters on every flimsy public building that had to pay his price before it was erected. The thieves of the slums pay tribute to it; the women you do not know; the office-

holders you have heard of—they all know what this price means to them. A whole State is asking about these things that you call gossip. Is it that this seems power to you, and therefore good to have? Have you thought what must lie behind such power, of how it was obtained, of what it tramples on in its exercise?"

"These are the drawbacks of success," she answered. "In the way of all achievement the detractors rise barking at it, harassing it, unwilling to see it succeed. From them comes this talk. It is the effort to reduce an unusual man to the level of the ranks from which he has risen. I have no wish to marry a weak-willed man, and all strength of will is bitterly opposed."

"Do you happen to know what success built on dishonest work means? Do you know anything at all of the work of the man you have promised to marry? Of what it is that will insure you food and clothes and shelter?"

"John Clany has built you a splendid home—out of what greedy levy on the wages of hidden sin? The bread you will eat at his table, the clothes you will wear—they will mean that some protected criminal has had to pay his share, that some city street is a rotten piece of work, that some pursued woman has given you luxury as the price of her immunity."

The girl gave a low cry.

"You will have to prove these things," she said.

He looked at her in a moment's silence. How prove such things to a girl into whose life men came only in dress parade? Yet perhaps even a girl trained to the ignorance that is supposed to be an added charm of girlhood could be made to see the significance of bribery and of lying. With his unhurt hand he drew from his pocket the packet of papers, and laid them in her hand.

"There is here proof of one little point that may perhaps show you that what I have said will bear your investigation. Some of the things you yourself can prove, but this will show you the way to go about it. I will ask you to read these papers, and then return

them to me. You will understand that matters of this kind are absolutely confidential, though you may speak of them as you choose to the man himself. Such things are not often committed to paper where a woman could come upon them, or a man, either, for that matter."

The girl's fingers closed around the packet laxly.

"I cannot believe it," she said. "This man—so strong and swift and powerful—a thief and scoundrel—no! So excellent a comrade"—her voice lowered—"so good a lover!"

Wade sat silent, watching her. To a man those things about Clany were matters to be proven or disproven by facts. But she arrayed against his accusations her ideal of the man, and appeared to have no wish to look such facts as he could muster in the face. He shifted his attack to meet this femininity.

"What is John Clany marrying you for, Rose?" he asked suddenly. "He has not permitted you to know of his work or of his ambitions—how, then, can you speak of comradeship? No woman companions a man so. A good lover—yes, other women have said it of him, are saying it now. Will this suffice you? Is this what marriage means to you?"

The girl found herself suddenly on ground that for all time has belonged to woman, and she answered the man without hesitation.

"It would not be strange if marriage meant a different thing to me than it means to the man who wishes to marry me. It is right that each should bring their own meaning into it. It is a larger thing—so interpreted."

And Wade, looking at her, heavy crowned with sheer femininity, was dumb before her; dumb, too, with a pain that was not made of the ethical things he had been urging, but of primitive things born into the world thousands of years before it knew of honor or self-sacrifice. And the pain twisted his tongue into its first rancor.

"Whatever the meaning of this marriage to John Clany," he said, and his voice stung, "by it he reaches into your

father's very grave, and aims a blow at him, dead and defenseless."

The girl rose shuddering. The papers the man had given her slipped to the floor. There was a heavy silence while she looked back into her school days to that day of blank horror and of hushed voices; of white-faced men carrying a burden that only that morning had gone forth a power for righteousness so strong that thousands of men exulted in it, and was now a maimed body with the life stamped out.

She had been too young to know what her father's fight and its tragic end had meant. She had never found the courage since to ask about it or to read about it. A political situation meant almost nothing to her. The men behind it less. The principles governing it were not for the women of her world. And now it seemed she had been blind, and deaf, and incredibly unlearned in all the things a woman needed most to understand. She stooped and took the papers, and spoke, stooping:

"This hint of other women—does your charge against the men I have promised to marry include this?"

"Yes."

"Is—*is* there one especial woman?"

"Yes."

She rose and faced him.

"Good-by," she said, and the shadow that lay on her face spoke of the burden of women.

She walked out into the street facing her woman's problem. How could she clear from her sight these mists of ignorance of the world about her—a world in which even nature seemed to prefer men, a world whose work is done by men? Because she was a woman was no longer a reason for her lack of understanding of this man's work, of this man's world.

Yet how was a woman, sheltered and watched, to learn these things? The women who waited on her in the stores knew more than she. She looked out at the asphalt of the city street, where men were working on repairs. How was she to know about city streets? What could she learn of men holding to their means of earning bread by bribery? The old

idea of tribute to a protecting feudal lord did not seem very wrong to her, yet it appeared that honorable men called it by an ugly name.

And the women, hunted and hunting, and paying of their tragic gain for leave to live their tragedy! She had supposed this no matter for a girl's recognition. Yet such as she, ignorant of these things of the world that at any moment might engulf them, were called on to companion men, to be daughters and sisters of men, to be wives, to be mothers of men, their teachers and trainers!

Of such ignorant wives, of such blind mothers, came the tragedy of the hunted woman. It was indeed high time that she faced life not as her world of women saw it, but as it was; time that she knew honor for what it meant in a world of expediency and competence, for what it signified of self-control and patient effort.

Her father could have helped her. And, groping for her answer, asked of old by Solomon learning of the Most High, there came to her the meaning of friendship between men and women. There were women who had had for their friends fathers, and brothers, and husbands; who had made of them real friends, out of whose eyes they could look on portions of the world their own lives denied them. There were women who knew life by having to go out among men and earn their bread; women who knew it by working for other women.

Even denied this, she was yet her father's daughter. Let her help herself. What was to hinder her from opening her eyes wide on these things to which she had been so blind?

First of all, she would know all she might about her father's death, about the conditions that had brought it about. It was not so long ago but that she could find the files of every newspaper that had written of what this death meant.

She paused a moment, considering the library she must reach; and the idea of the house of books came to her as part of her answer. Books, too, were friends. There must be many books

ready to answer her questions, ready to tell her of these things she knew nothing of—books written by men who understood their world, by women who had found wisdom.

She came back to the men she knew. There was the doctor who had sent her on the morning's quest. He had been her father's friend—perhaps he would be hers—perhaps even a teacher as were the doctors of old. She passed rapidly over such other men as she knew. They were the merest of lay figures. And then Wade—he had tried at least to be her friend—or had there been another reason?

Slowly, weighing what he had said, she admitted that it was possible for a man to love a woman and be all the more her loyal friend. It might even be that without such friendship love was a flimsy thing. For the first time she asked herself if she could expect friendship from the man she had promised to marry. And, in answer, she found that she had never expected from him any of the things one demands of a friend. She had been appealed to by the strength that, as a woman, she herself lacked. His very ruthlessness had its attraction for her. She would be won only by a man not to be denied.

Yet this was the idea of marriage the cave woman must have had. Surely she, the product of a thousand opportunities for women unknown even a century ago, was something else than a collection of primal instincts. And then, even as she denied the primitive woman within her, she was shaken by a force as old as sex and almost as strong. This man who won her by his very refusal of any necessity to woo her in friendly fashion, desired her merely for the enrichment of his living.

This being true, she could not hope to be the only woman in his life. There were other women. There was one especial woman. She faced this with its significance; faced also the fact that in the lives of many men of personal power there was often more than one woman.

If she satisfied herself that this was true of John Clancy, was it a thing to be

endured? If she chose to mate with this kind of man, must she be content to be only a small influence in one side of his life?

Resentment grew within her, searching for sustenance. She looked down at the papers Wade had given her. She was ready for them. Grasping them with new firmness, she mounted the library steps.

And while she faced her proof and the pain of the proof; while she read the musty files of newspapers, yellow with the years, read them with eyes sullen with anger or misty with tears, the man she had left in his invalid chair sat staring steadily before him until the dusk gathered about him, and in the night he lay staring into the darkness.

All the tension of the wakeful hours lay in the single word with which he greeted the doctor whose coming was delayed until nearly noon.

"She left for Florida this morning," said the doctor, "and I myself furnished the papers with the notice of the postponement of her wedding. She could not have stayed any longer in her stepmother's house after last night's scene with her. She went so far as to tell her stepmother that for her father's wife to have hoped for such a marriage was in itself a tragedy. I do not know what she said to Clany. Doubtless she gave him a chance to defend himself. He was in the library with her when I arrived in response to a summons from her stepmother. Even through the closed door you could hear Clany talking—more than Clany usually talks. He did not seem to see us as he went out. And his face was a thing to remember. The notices read that the wedding is postponed as a result of this accident."

At Wade's impassive face, with its drawn look, the doctor paused and indulged in a moment's interlude.

"A fine way we have of marrying our girls! It is such a usual thing to worry a girl about to be married half to death with parties, and shopping, and antenuptial fluddub, that nobody is surprised at an excuse of nervous breakdown when an accident like this intervenes."

"And in reality——" said Wade.

"In reality"—the doctor's voice softened—"the girl has made every moment teach her—yes, even Clany has taught her; she has made him do so. She is incomparably finer and stronger. What is the matter?"

"There is nothing the matter. I moved my arm to see how stiff it was."

The doctor looked at him thoughtfully.

"As soon," he said, "as you are a little better, a month's loaf out of doors will be what you need. Can you afford it?"

"I can afford it."

"Have you any choice as to place?"

"Yes," said Wade. "I have. I prefer Florida."

The doctor drew a packet of papers from his pocket.

"I was asked," he said, "to return you these. They were not to be intrusted to the mail. There is, I think, a note with them. I will go in and talk with the nurse about you a moment."

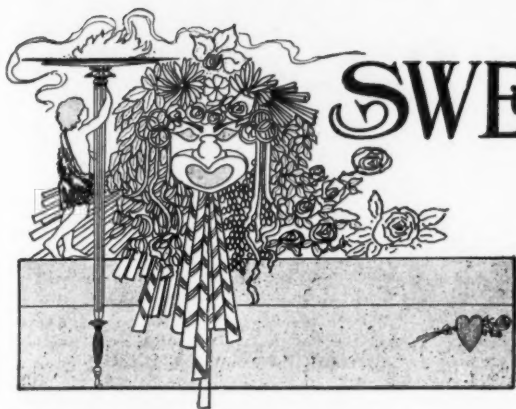
The door closed behind him. Wade looked down at the note in his hand, and, as he looked, the drawn lines of his face softened, and his eyes took on the glow of one who looks ahead and sees there something long desired that may not always be denied.

FROM OUT THE SILENCE

THINKING I was alone, I spoke thy name,
When suddenly from out the silence came
A numerous company.

For Love was there, and with her Joy—and Fear,
While Memory and Tenderness drew near,
When I but called on thee!

ALICE COREY.



SWEETS

By

May
Edginton

THE band, that excellent Raimondi band, stopped on a grand finale, and comparative silence fell. A man and a girl sitting at a near table heaved sighs, called themselves back from Heaven knows where, looked appreciation at each other crudely as people do, touched their champagne glasses together, and drank.

"Good luck, Anna!" he said, leaning to her. "Here's to the big chance when it comes, and may success attend it. Here's all the sweets of life to you!"

The girl fluttered her heavy eyelids to him, and half smiled by way of thanks, her fingers playing round the stem of her glass.

"Don't know what *you* want," she said. "But here's to it. Luck and happiness!" She drank again. "But the first would bring the second," she added. "Luck! Luck! Luck! And mine's out!"

She leaned back, and looked round perfunctorily at the usual kind of interesting crowd one may see downstairs in the Raimondi between eleven and twelve—nearer twelve. She wore a shabby, smart, black velvet coat, and was topped by a huge black hat, against which her pale face was limned very clear and sharp. Her hair was black as the hat, her eyes were great, gray, and tired; her lips were touched cleverly with sufficient red. She looked

hungry—no, not that kind of hunger. He had provided for that as usual with a supper that touched the bottom of his pocket. Oysters, deviled chickens' legs, champagne. Still, many well-fed people go hungry all their lives for the big chance, the sweets of life, and so on. I suppose Anna was not the only famished wretch supping at the Raimondi.

"It'll turn. The tide'll come in," he said. "You're in a hurry. I suppose, from the provinces to understudy Mamie Kox is a pretty good step upward."

"Steps! Steps! Steps!" she cried impatiently. She leaned across the table to say: "Hang steps!" in his ear. He smiled anxiously and compassionately. She went on:

"I want to *fly*. Right up the ladder. Six years in the provinces, and now understudying Mamie Kox—that's slow work. Seven years getting from one rung to the other! And I *could* fly—but my luck's out, Carpy. Mamie's played for seventy nights without a break, and she'll play through the whole run. There'll be no big chance for me."

The champagne was finished, and coffee came. Carpenter lighted both cigarettes. They smoked for a few moments in silence.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked abruptly.

"Myself," he admitted. "Solely of myself."

"Queer, for you. You shall tell me, going home. It would be interesting to hear Carpy on Himself—a new topic. I myself—I make no bones about being a crass egoist, it's I—I—I—who fill my thoughts from morning till night—and the big chance. Oh! Oh! Oh! Carpy, if only——"

"It's coming right enough."

"Think so?" Her eyes sparkled, seeing which he was very pleased. "I dream of it sometimes. Mamie sprains her leg, has a headache—anything—don't matter what. I'm on. Hurrah! The public takes to me like ducks to the water—the duck of a public! It's kind—the public. It knows its mind, too. It loves good looks first. Carpy, am I——"

"Anna, *darling*, you are."

"Don't call me 'darling,' there's a dear boy. Mustn't! We're talking about that nice great beast, the public. It loves looks, then. It loves ginger, and it likes 'em young. Let me just once put my number fours into Mamie's sixes, and—— Anyway, I'd have had it—the chance! I've dreamed it often, how I tickled the public, and how it roared—nice beast! I out-Mamied Mamie. It was a great night—full of triumph. One could live a night like that, and die. Cheers, calls, all for Anna Nero! Anna Nero! Crowd of men waiting afterward for a word—or to see if they could get an introduction, and ask me to supper."

"Only you were going to have it with me," he broke in quickly.

"I don't believe you were in the dream at all, Carpy," she said, dropping her cigarette into her coffee cup.

The band had dispersed. Supper parties were breaking up. At her motion he rose, and, taking her big feather stole jealously from the attentive waiter, wound it about her neck himself. They went out; the porter whistled up a hansom which had a horse with four whole legs between the shafts, and they jingled into Broadway, which was ablaze with light, all alive and throbbing. Anna Nero, still dream-flushed and beautiful under the black hat,

leaned back, and felt something behind that moved and closed round her.

"Carpy," she said, "is that your arm? Because take it away, there's a dear. Mustn't!"

"This once, Anna," he whispered.

"Better not, Carpy. You'll only——"

She paused. "You'll only lose your head," she said succinctly.

He withdrew the arm, and stared out ahead. They were trotting up Broadway toward Harlem. Anna could see his face clearly by the light flashed on it, rather white, and full of repressed passion.

"Tell me what you were thinking of at supper, Carpy," she said presently, to break a silence.

"About losing you," he answered.

"Losing?"

"Losing. I'm no fool, Anna—not all round, that is. Only on one point, and you won't let me speak of that."

"Better not, Carpy," she murmured.

"The day that sees your big chance come'll lose you to me as a—a—a—a friend. My dear, an actress in the front doesn't find time to keep up acquaintance with chemists' assistants, and such small fry. I've had it all out with myself at times."

He looked at her very closely, but she did not break the heavy silence that fell when he stopped speaking.

"At times," he repeated, "I've shown myself the future clearly, as clearly as any one can see, that is. I've known that very soon it must end—waiting at the stage door for you—our little suppers—Sunday afternoons in the park—these drives home with you—these splendid drives home. If I were a rich man, it might be different."

He stopped again.

"Might be different, Anna?" he whispered.

It was a question put passionately, though in a whisper. She half answered it.

"No, Carpy, but——"

He nodded.

"It might be different," he said, regaining mastery over his voice. "As it is, I'm not going to worry you, Anna. I shall be your friend, I suppose, while

you permit me the privilege, and afterward—why, I'll be glad that the big chance came, that you took it, were successful, that—that circumstances should enable you to forget such as I. I'd do more. I'd throw the chance in your way if I could—proud to do it. I wish you everything you wish for yourself—the height of your ambition."

"Carpy," she said, "you're a dear!"

They were driving beside the park. Traffic was less, and lights were fewer for the moment.

"Anna," he said, "let me have a kiss. This once. I've never——"

"Better not, Carpy."

"I wonder if you'll ever love anything better than your ambition," he said, acquiescing rather savagely to the denial. She did not answer. "A kiss—one—wouldn't matter," he added.

"Not to me," she answered, "but to you——"

The inference was true and painful. It is to be supposed that Anna Nero knew her Book of Hearts, and saved him the aftermath of a kiss. But——

"Tell you what, Carpy," she said suddenly, with a little laugh. "After the big chance, I will. *If* you ask me to supper that night, and *if* you drive me home, you can—once to congratulate me."

A thrill ran through him. He turned his head and looked at her; clean-cut, white profile against dead blackness; great eyes, beautiful lips.

"Here's to the big chance!" he said again. "And may it come quickly!"

She went on:

"And afterward—I shan't forget you, Carpy. You've been a good pal. You're the very best. I shall send you stalls. You shan't miss a first night. You shall sit in the front row of the stalls. And the great, great Anna Nero will make eyes at you."

She turned her head, and out of the sheer mischief of the moment sent a shaft from her gray eyes at him that made him tremble.

"My God, Anna, don't!" he ripped out.

She was serious again in a moment.

"Carpy, don't be so fond of me,

dear," she begged. "Mustn't. It's no good—not a morsel. I'm going to live for art, not for any man alive. It's not you, but it's nobody else, if that's any comfort to you. You've bucked me up tremendously to-night, Carpy, you and your optimism for me. You've made me feel it's coming—the real champagne of life."

"Think it's that?" he asked, as the hansom stopped.

She nodded, laughing, as she got out. He paid and dismissed the cab, and rang her bell.

"Good night, Carpy," she said, yawning and smiling with a flash of white teeth.

The door was opened upon them almost immediately by a sleepy landlady, and she hastened in. Carpenter, with necessary consideration for his pockets, walked back.

It was nearly two o'clock when he let himself in at the side door of the chemist's shop which he managed. He had rooms over it—bedroom and sitting room. He walked upstairs very quietly, switched on the light, and cast himself down into an armchair before the still-glimmering fire. The light showed him a tall, thin man of twenty-eight, or thereabouts, fair-haired, rather dog-lipped.

There were three photos of Anna Nero on the mantelpiece, at which he looked straightway for a few minutes. Stretching out his hand, he took them one by one off the mantelpiece, and kissed them. Well, there was no one to see.

He put them back in a row, lighted a pipe, and sat back in his chair with his hands behind his head, and the pipe in his teeth, staring at the photos. The pretty, reckless, defiant face stared smiling back. He looked till he thought he read the dream in the eyes, that dream that came to her often: "How I tickled the public and how it roared—nice beast! Mamie sprains her foot—has a headache—anything—don't matter what. I'm on! Hurrah!" And it is a great night—full of triumph. Cheers, calls, all for Anna Nero! Anna Nero!"

And it did not matter in the least, of course, what ailed Mamie Kox. Not in the very le—

Carpenter's pipestem snapped between his teeth. He sat up, and chucked the broken pieces into the fire. It is extraordinary on what a direct line a man's thoughts hunt, once he looses them, and they pick up a scent. He sat there and let them rip, not saying "Steady!" or "Come back!" or "Impossible!" when they got hold of impossibilities, and turned them into possibilities, possibilities into probabilities, probabilities into certainties, and certainties into Anna's big chance.

Presently he turned round, on a memory which was all in the direct line, and saw the last number of the *Imperial Magazine* on the table, where he had thrown it before going out. The magazine published an art supplement every month, devoted to prominent actresses and other luminous stars. He flicked over the pages till he reached Miss Mamie Kox, now playing in the title rôle of Dorset Vaughan's new play, "Maude." Beneath were printed such extracts from the actress' conversation with her interviewer as would fit into the page. They ran in this wise:

"Indeed," said Miss Kox, in reply to my questions, "I do not think I have ever had a part in which I have taken more pleasure than *Maude*. You have heard that Mr. Vaughan created it for me? Well, perhaps he did! Anyway he and the public—and even my severest critics—all say that I was born to play *Maude*. There is tremendous scope for versatility in the character, and the emotional heights reached by the great third act are marvelous. You are looking at my pug. Is he not a darling? Too fat? Ah, well, he is addicted, like his mistress, to sweets. But his mistress is not too fat? Did I really ask for that? Thanks, anyway. Well, we are *both* addicted to sweets, particularly marrons glacés. Some of my admirers, knowing that, often—" et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Carpenter, alone with those little devils of thoughts, and faced by those three photos of Anna—Anna, who panted for "scope for versatility," for chance to storm New York in the emotional heights reached by the great third act of "Maude," read that over twice. On

the floor below him ranged shelves full of tools ready to the hand of a man filled with expert knowledge to use them.

Anna Nero!

Come out, Anna! Come out, Beauty, and face the Beast! For it is a nice beast, which loves good looks, which loves ginger, which likes 'em young. You have it all. Come out, for the call boy is knocking at your door, and saying: "Miss Nero! Miss Nero!" in his little Bowery voice, which might be all the harps of heaven choiring to you. It is only three hours since you heard of Miss Mamie Kox's sudden inexplicable attack of sickness, and what a life you have lived through since then! Fortune has come and offered herself, saying: "Take me, and I am yours!" A world has been laid at your feet. You are about to drink the real champagne of life, are you not? You have your fours in Mamie's sixes, and—

There are no such things as faithful friends, love, despair, memories, rungs to the ladder, and what-not in all the world—only one brand-new star absorbing the firmament. Anna Nero! Anna Nero! Anna Nero! You're on! Hurrah!

She played *Maude* to a disappointed house, because of the absence of its Miss Mamie Kox, but a packed house—packed full of the nice beast—or beasts—called the public. It was ready to welcome, to reassure her, had she needed reassurance, which she did not. In five minutes it took her to its heart.

She looked over the footlights into the dark house. She held its silence. There were wireless, vibrant messages between it and her. The great third act came, and she was mistress of it. She had her finger on two thousand pulses, and her swaying voice reached down to two thousand hearts. She was drunk with this new champagne. It was the big chance, and on it she soared to heights that Mamie Kox had never touched. This was Anna Nero's night, solely hers, and she reigned supreme over it. She tasted the full power of woman and actress.

Carpenter sat well in the center of the orchestra, gripping his hands together, and thrilling through every fiber of his body.

"I knew!" he said silently. "I knew. It was in her—bound to come out. But it was I who opened the door."

The door through which she passed away from him forever. Of course.

"We're not in the same street—not in the same world any more. There'll be to-night's supper—she's promised that—and the drive home."

Anna took half a dozen calls at the end of the piece. "Bravos!" roared at her from a vociferous house, amid a storm of clapping. She bowed again and again, drinking in admiration, and looking magnificent under the stimulant. It was glorious—a night to live for, and die. But she could not have died yet—being too greedy for more, for the nights to follow—the nights—and nights—and nights. What a world!

She was still pulsing with sheer, unstinted rapture when she swept to her dressing room in the last of *Maude's* beautiful frocks, and had time to notice the bouquet of roses on her table. Carpenter had sent them early in the evening, but she did not give him a thought. It was not natural cruelty, only that he belonged to the world behind. She was not looking behind, but forward. Ambition a leader now, not a sore goad. She swept the roses to one side to lean her hands on the dressing table, and stare at herself in the glass. Beautiful! Beautiful! There is no doubt that Anna Nero is going to be a success.

There were already notes on her dressing table. One or two merely visiting cards, from men with whom she had the barest of acquaintance, and one from a scion of a famous house with whom she had none—scribbled over with congratulations, best wishes, hopes that she will spare the writer a few minutes to-morrow night between the acts—or afterward. She smiled over them, flushing deeply under her rouge with a leaping heart.

I do not believe that any women remain really cold and ungratified from

men's tributes. They are naturally some of the sweetest experiences in the world, and the women who decry them as sour are the women who cannot reach the grapes, that is all. The actress read message after message, and put them together to date and lock away, and keep them like sacred love letters. And so they were—love letters from the big chance, written by representatives of the world.

She began to change rapidly. She had not yet thought of a faithful friend and lover who had supped and escorted her home night after night, back in the past. The past was six hours old, and already receding and dim. Her dresser knocked at the door, and hurried in with another note, scribbled also on a visiting card. The actress read:

Hope you remember me. Had the pleasure of meeting you in Cincinnati, Christmas, 1908. May we renew acquaintance, and if you are not already engaged, will you come on to supper somewhere? Royalty?

This was penciled over the printed name of Captain Phillips-Fox.

She had no recollection of him during the run of any play in Cincinnati at Christmas, 1908. Probably, however, they had met perfunctorily. Anyway, what did it matter? She had never had supper at the Royalty.

"Gentleman waiting, Miss Nero," said the dresser.

She wrote on the back of the card:

Remember you quite well. Thanks. I shall be about ten minutes. A. N.

It was taken out, and the dresser returned to say that Captain Phillips-Fox's car would wait outside the stage door, and Captain Phillips-Fox inside for Miss Nero.

She tossed aside *Maude's* long gown, and hurried into her own, and the black velvet coat and big black hat. She cold-creamed away all her rouge, needing none to-night to relieve habitual pallor. Her cheeks were carmined with triumph. Phillips-Fox was waiting just inside the stage door. She glanced keenly at him for a moment. He appeared an ordinary worldling, profess-

ing himself very elated at being the first to carry her off on this great night. He called it a "great night" sympathetically and admiringly. His car was drawn up to the curb outside.

There were several people hanging about the door, as is usually the case. Among them a very tall, fair-haired man, who started forward at sight of the black velvet coat, and back again at sight of its companion. Just as she settled into the car, she cast a glance over the shifting groups, and thought she saw—Memory smote her. Why, she had promised—They shot away. Phillips-Fox said:

"You have given us all a wonderful treat, Miss Nero. You are just stupendous. I know you are going to allow me to tell you *all* I think, and so I shall presently. I wonder now how *you* feel after such a triumph as that? Tell me. I suppose every paper will be full of you to-morrow, and half the people in the Royalty will be looking out for you to come in to-night."

"Half the people in the Royalty will be looking out for you to come in." Carpenter's fair, thin, dogged face barely crossed her vision. Oh, he knew his book, did Carpy, when he said: "Soon it must end—waiting at the stage door for you—our little suppers." That thought fled through her mind for the briefest of moments. The car ran smoothly along Fifth Avenue. In a few minutes the Royalty—luxury, music, an electric whisper passing, a well-dressed crowd turning to stare at her.

"That's Anna Nero, the wonderful girl who——"

Elixir of life!

"Heard about Mamie?" said a man in the cast to Anna Nero, as she hurried into the theater after lunch the next afternoon. It was *matinée* day. "Seems she's been poisoned. No, she's not doing it for advertisement. Wouldn't break her run in a part like that merely for an ad, you know. I've been round to inquire, and saw her in bed. Oh, looks a fearful sight! Fact, I assure you! I'll never be able to

make love to her again. Really. Hope you'll be *Maude* forever."

"Go on about Mamie."

"Oh! The illness? Yes, as I was saying, she's been poisoned. Not with a deadly poison, you know, but tartar emetic, which, taken in small doses, makes you awful sick and incapable, and, persisted in, they say, puts you out entirely. Yesterday morning Mamie had a box of marrons glacés from some admirer who showed a studied forgetfulness in omitting his card. She says she's awful gone on marrons glacés—*Imperial Magazine* was gassing about it only last number—and she ate two after lunch. Frightful effect. Soon as the doctor had been there, and her head was better—said she felt very swimmy, and lots of other things—she had the sweets sent out to be analyzed. Two grains of tartar emetic in every blessed chestnut! Mamie got a detective at once. 'I'll make an advertisement of it, Johnny,' she says to me, 'if I can't do anything else.' But she's furious about it, really. I shall go round and hear developments to-morrow."

The thing was gossiped of in the dressing rooms, though it was not given to the public before the evening papers came out with headlines flaring that Miss Mamie Kox had been poisoned. Particulars given below somewhat modified the extremity of the headlines, however. It was only tartar emetic. Be that as it may, Miss Kox was incapacitated certainly for the next three days. The news flew through the New York theaters. That eminent actor, John Boyd, calling on Mamie again the next day for the "developments," found her primed with them.

The popular actress was lying on a couch in her room, in a pink wrapper that accentuated her ghastly whiteness. She certainly looked, as she felt, very shaken. She was a woman of forty-five—when she was ill—black-haired and eyed, and nearly as tall as Anna Nero.

"Sit down, John," she said, "and I'll give you a few minutes, though I'm going to rest—rest—rest till I can come

on again. I'm furious about this affair."

"Of course you are."

"Never mind, though. We've found our man. A young chemist whom, to the best of my knowledge, I've never set eyes on. The thing worked out with the most absurd simplicity. I employed a detective, as you know. He took the address of the firm who sold those marrons glacés, and went there. They had sold exactly half a dozen boxes of the marrons glacés only the day before mine was sent. Two were to men. He got a more or less accurate description of the men. The girl he questioned suddenly said that she believed one of them was a chemist, and gave the address she thought was right. It all fitted. A chemist or doctor or some such informed person would be the one most likely to know exactly what amount of that horrible emetic to give. They took the girl to the chemist's, and she identified the man—the manager of the shop, named Carpenter. And he is arrested, and will be charged to-morrow. I shall have to drag myself there somehow."

"But what are the fellow's reasons, if I may ask?"

"You may ask, and I ask. Everybody'll ask. I hope he'll find something pretty to say, anyway." She threw a little glance at a mirror on the opposite wall. "I don't easily forgive any one who makes me look a horrid wreck."

"He'll get five years—and deserve them," said the actor.

So that Boyd had more to tell Anna Nero when they met that night.

"Seen the evening papers?" he asked.

"Not a line. How's Mamie?"

He launched into the news, beginning:

"Mamie's copped the man. A chemist chap—"

She knew at once, of course, in a sudden blinding flash. Boyd went on:

"No reason given, so far. Mamie pretends she doesn't know anything about him—did it beautifully."

He ran on through the whole thing. She listened, with her heart in a tight clutch of amaze and fear, feigning ig-

norance, interest, and astonishment, all at the right moments. And, mercifully, it was all at once time to dress.

She went on to play *Maude*. The part was that of a woman who gave all for love. It was supreme. It was her life. For the first time the unreality of it smote Anna. Here was she, mouth-ing beautiful sentiment, offering sacrifice, spurning as dross everything on earth save one great love. She represented this—she, filled with self, hard and eager with ambition, clinging to the top of the only ladder she had eyes for, and for which she would barter a *Maude's* heaven. Self, ambition, and the top of the ladder!

I do not say that she defined all this while she acted magnificently, sobbed, smiled, rhapsodied, and laughed; but when she went to her dressing room at the end of the evening, she was left looking at herself. She was a much smaller thing than she had thought. The champagne did not sparkle. Looking at the future, she was faced by a great gap in it. She did not read the notes on her dressing table, but, sending her dresser away, swept them and a load of flowers aside, stretched out her arms, and laid her black head down. She sat thus, very still.

"Carpy, you old fool!" was her first thought. "Carpy, you dear fool!" her second.

She had forgotten him, and forgotten to send an explanatory note about the Phillips-Fox supper. The excuse and the truth would have run something like:

"An old friend, whom I do not remember ever having seen before, turned up and asked me to supper, and I thought that I should prefer the Royalty to Raimondi's, that you would understand—" and so on.

She found herself crying. At the difficulties to be faced, of course. Nothing softer. Carpenter had given no reasons, as yet, for what he had done, and the real reasons must not be given. She must not be implicated. She was still first, you see. If it is known that an admirer of an understudy administers tartar emetic to the star, in or-

der to give the understudy her big chance, what will be thought? That the understudy knew more than a little of the matter. She reasoned it out.

"He must say—say—something. I must not be mentioned. It would be fatal. Mamie would make Laurence"—Laurence was the actor-manager—"chuck me. And I've just got hold. I'm up. I'm there. I can't climb down an inch. If I could only get a word with Carpy to-morrow morning, and be sure that I'm safe."

She changed rapidly, and went straight home, refusing escort. No dreams came that night; she tossed miserably through the greater part of it. By ten o'clock the next morning she had dressed and breakfasted.

She took a taxi to the Tombs, and asked the officials, careless of the little sensation she created among them, to allow her to see Carpenter alone. After some delay, and an appeal to authority, the request was granted. She found him walking about a bare room.

She stood with her back against the door a moment, hardly sure how to proceed, horribly moved.

"Morning, Carpy," she said at last.

The blood rushed up his face.

"Anna!" he said, under his breath. "You—what have you come for? There wasn't any need."

She moved forward. She had on a slim-cut coat and skirt that showed her beautiful feet. Carpenter looked at every line of her as she came.

"Well, I—I came from sympathy," she murmured. It seemed rather insufficient, and was not the truth. She was close to him, and, laying her hands on his arms, put up her face. "And I owed you—something—for the big chance."

Carpenter made no effort at restraint, but closed his arms round her, and paid himself so liberally that she resisted, and panted between his kisses:

"Better not, Carpy. Better not. Mustn't!"

"It's for the first and last time, Anna."

"Yes, yes, I know." She was struggling with unwonted emotion. "Carpy,

I came to know—what you're going to say. You've given me the big chance. I've taken it—it's all come gloriously, but I—I—I—if any one knew—"

Knowing Anna Nero so well, he understood completely, and felt no bitterness about the understanding.

"It'll be all right, Anna," he promised abruptly. "I shall keep your name out. You ought to know that. I quite understood what it'd mean. I'd reckoned with it all. I've got my story to tell, all pat. I'm jealous of Mamie." He laughed shortly. "Jealous of Mamie! I fell in love with her, and—the story's not quite finished off yet, but it'll be all pat when the case goes up to court—"

"What, you think—"

"Yes," he said quietly. "I shouldn't be surprised if it makes quite a big case. Maliciously inflicting bodily harm, you know, and so on. Not that I've hurt Mamie Kox at all. I knew enough to steer clear of danger, of course. Still, I've got to make up a story, and I suppose it all depends on what construction a judge and jury can put upon it. Ripping advertisement for Mamie. But nobody's grateful in this world."

"Carpy, I am. Grateful's a poor word—"

It was, wasn't it?

"You can kiss me again, if you like."

This time it was Carpenter who said: "Better not, Anna. Mustn't!"

He stood looking at her.

"Don't worry your little head, will you?" he asked. "Because I shall see you're all right. Just go on acting, climbing from success to success, and don't worry yourself, dear, over the misfortunes of your friends. You can't help them, though they've helped you, and that'll be a ripping thought to cheer me up when—"

He stopped, not to harrow her. But, being a clear-sighted man, he saw his future as plainly as he saw Anna.

"I suppose I had better go," she said faintly.

"I suppose you had," he assented.

"I feel a—a—a wretch," she said, by way of administering a sop to that Cerberus, conscience.

Carpenter's eyes contradicted her passionately. He added aloud:

"Be advised, dear, and I'll keep you out, all right. Just drop the whole thing—not a word, not a sign, don't try to meddle—and—and—and drop me. Of course."

She began to walk to the door, her eyes on the ground. He followed, saying good-by. Almost immediately she seemed to be outside, with no very clear recollection of how they parted, and walking away from the place. The case was to be heard at two o'clock. It was now nearly twelve. She wanted quiet. She took a taxi, and went to a luncheon and tea room, where one may have quiet. She ordered lunch, and began to eat. A subdued piano and violin began to play, very soon, the waltz from "The Chocolate Soldier":

Come, come, I am so lonely.

She found herself crooning silently in time to it. It struck a thought. She left her lunch, and sat trembling. There are times when we all stop doing, and sit looking, looking out into life; and all the books written in the length and breadth of the universe throughout the centuries will not show us what that clear look will do. "To glance with an eye," said Walt Whitman, "is to confound the learning of all time."

But I must not concern myself here with generalities—only with Anna, sitting in her quiet, screened corner. She looked out into life, and saw, sun-clear, that life is primary, and that play acting is not life, though a great deal of life is play acting; that a woman cannot live on the goad of ambition only, but there must come times when she wants something softer, holier, deeper, a quiet pillow to rest on; that what is called love is great, supreme, all that is life.

Carpenter forced himself gigantically on her horizon. He filled it. She began to see. "What's this he's done? Swapped his life for—what?—a kiss—a sweet—and out he goes into the dark, and I'm to have all the boxfuls that life can give me, and he—not another one."

She saw, bringing herself down from

the heroic to the concrete, that at least financial ruin, public disgrace stared him in the face, because he had loved her so terribly. Anna Nero, trembling, asked: "But do I love him? I do!"

It was nearly two o'clock when she gave up fighting for herself. There was ecstasy in surrender. She could not stay a moment longer. She went to the court where the case was to be heard.

She arrived as the presiding magistrate was hearing the charge against Henry Jocelyn Carpenter, chemist, of administering an injurious emetic to Miss Mamie Kox, actress. The sensation she created was unique. Mamie herself was there, with Boyd, and several other of the profession. Carpenter was pale and silent, offering no explanation.

Anna Nero went into the witness box, and gave the whole story. Nothing could stop her. She gave it magnificently, so that some people whispered: "These actresses—always acting!" But a wave of sympathy murmured through the court, too.

She said, halfway through: "He loved me—he did it for me." She said at the end: "I love him. I come here for him—to give the story as he would not give it because of me."

And, looking down, flushed and reckless, she saw Mamie Kox dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief.

There was silence for a moment or two when Anna Nero had borne her unsolicited witness, then the popular actress leaned forward, and whispered to her lawyer. A buzz went round the court. A few women cried. Every one looked at Anna Nero. Miss Kox's lawyer, rising, said that his client desired to withdraw the charge.

There were cheers raised that officialdom strove hastily to suppress, and the theatrical people left the court in a group.

"I'm awf'ly angry," said Mamie Kox, squeezing Anna's hand. "But, there—you two take a taxi home, and talk it all over. A taxi's better for the purpose than a hansom. And my love to you both. And John Boyd's love, and

everybody's love, for all the world—you know. Johnny, I feel better enough for some lunch. Had yours? Well, come and see me eat mine somewhere."

The evening papers had it all, supplying full details of everything and everybody concerned in a miraculous manner. The headlines trumpeted: "Romance of Actress and Chemist." "Miss Anna Nero's Big Chance." "Maude, and Her Adorer." "Extraordinary Story of the Stage." "Romantic Sequel to the Poisoning of Miss Mamie Kox." And so on through every phase of reporters' ingenuity.

The morning papers copied, going one better. They were able to tell how Anna Nero played *Maude* that night, and how, in the front row of the stalls, sat the hero, culprit, or whatever one might call him.

"You shall sit in the front row of the stalls, and the great, great Anna Nero will make eyes at you." So she did.

Among the interested readers was Captain Phillips-Fox.

He called about three o'clock the next afternoon—it not being *matinée* day—at Miss Nero's rooms, to compliment the new girl in a chafing sort of way, you know, on her splendid knack of stepping before the public eye. They said at his clubs that the police-court play was quite a little *chef d'œuvre*. Anna, in slim-cut clothes, and a wonderful black hat, was charmed to see him. Her little sitting room was filled with flowers—banks of white.

She explained then, giving him her hand:

"This is a gala day. I was married this morning."

"You were——"

"Married this morning. Private ceremony. We busy people haven't always time for preliminaries and ceremonies. I suppose you've read the papers, and know all about it?"

"Yes—but—I—congratulations, I'm sure."

"I know what you're thinking," she said, with her customary abandon, "what other people think: These actresses, they'd do anything for adver-

tisement! Love, hate, live, die, in perfect happiness as long as the limelight's on. I created a 'unique sensation' in court yesterday, the papers say. I gave myself a first-class advertisement, dressed my soul, and put it up in the shop window to edify the public."

"My dear girl, I'm sure I—you're the most spontaneous, genuine——"

She laughed, shaking back her head.

"Advertisements pay, of course," she said, with happy irony. "Look there." She indicated scattered letters on her writing desk by a sweep of the hand. "Letters from managers, agents, and admirers of all classes. I've arrived, impudently advertising myself. Mamie Kox wrote to me this morning—the dear! Would you like to read what she says?"

She found a letter among the heap, and handed it to him. Phillips-Fox, looking rather bewildered at these vagaries of sentiment, read:

MY DEAR: You're a trump, a brick, and you made me feel beastly ashamed of myself yesterday. No, not for any specific reason, but generally—all round. You reminded me of something I thought I'd clean forgotten—the real kind of love that comes best when you're young. Don't chuck it away, my dear. Hearts want something human, not only a profession. Never mind if your chemist man's as poor as a rat. I liked his face. My love to you both.

MAMIE.

P. S.—They say you play *Maude* better than me. My congrats. Do it again.

"Very fine—very nice, I'm sure," replied Captain Phillips-Fox, returning the letter, and resigning himself to bewilderment.

A very tall, fair-haired man came through from the inner room, and looked at Phillips-Fox with the imperitence of a conqueror.

"Captain Phillips-Fox—my husband," said Anna.

Phillips-Fox left soon after the introduction was accomplished.

"Don't suppose he'll stand in her way," he said to himself, turning into the street. "They never do. But it's a shocking pity. Still, in a week, she'll learn to keep him in the background. They all do."

But she did not learn it in a life.

THE SCRATCH



S. Nalbro
Bartley

I'D take a pretty deep scratch," said Caldwell thoughtfully. "A fellow doesn't throw off generations of training in a minute."

Ross pulled a tattered Panama hat brim over his sunburned face, and settled back in his chair in silence.

"I don't agree, Caldwell," objected Young Thomas, a newly arrived officer; "I think you're wrong. Civilization is only a veneer, and a pretty thin one, too. And when something with thorns sweeps along and scratches, the veneer doesn't stand the strain."

"Then you believe we're all latent savages, waiting for the scratch that sets our pulses beating?"

Caldwell's tone was a trifle sarcastic. He thought Young Thomas needed a little extra hazing in addition to his West Point training. Having come from the United States only a week or so ago, he was still under the cloak of hospitality.

"I do," said Young Thomas gravely. "What do you think, Ross?"

Ross pushed the tattered hat brim upward, showing a square expanse of determined forehead.

"I think you're both right," he murmured lazily. "Our senior friend Caldwell knows savagery better than our junior friend Thomas. Caldwell's been in the Philippines long enough to celebrate every feast of the savage calendar, from their attacks of reversion and consequent head-hunting expeditions to

the desperate attempts at becoming civilized. So you can't blame Caldwell when he turns Pharisee and says: 'Never like these.'"

Caldwell chuckled. He liked to hear Ross' heavy bass roll out melodiously in answer to the officers' pastime arguments. But Young Thomas pressed the point.

"Well?" he added, as Ross called a *muchacho* to bring whisky.

"Well," Ross rumbled on, "I think you are right in a broader sense than Caldwell. I agree that civilization is only a thin veneer, and I think that when scratched we would find that the centuries of repression have but emphasized our savagery. The normal savage can indulge in his wildest flights of barbarism. We must harness our emotions, and put a checkrein on primitive impulses. Caldwell is right again in thinking we would not copy the native—we would outstrip him, once scratched."

Caldwell took the whisky decanter from the waiting *muchacho*, and poured out some glasses.

"Here you go, boys," he said jovially. "Here's to the scratch! May we escape her thorns long enough to dance at Ross' wedding."

The other two drank the toast solemnly. Ross was going to be married to Amy Traynor next fall in Manila.

"You're a trained specimen, anyway, Ross," added Caldwell, as he rose to go inside. "You're warranted and double

guaranteed for one lifetime—four score at the lowest number. You're fairly riveted with civilization's chains, engaged to your best chum's sister, stationed at——"

"I wish we'd hear from old Jack," interrupted Ross. "I'm uneasy about him. Those mountaineers are a bad lot, and Jack's been gone overtime."

"When does Miss Amy come?"

"Expect her to-morrow from Tacloban," Ross answered, an earnest look creeping into his eyes. "She *would* come down, you know, and see us here. Talk about a globe trotter."

Young Thomas was intent on watching the water buffalo roll in soft slime.

Caldwell stepped nearer to say in a lower tone:

"Queer little duck, Young Thomas. I like him. Funny argument to put up a battle over. Imagine wasting good tropical time debating whether a chap's a savage at heart."

Ross smiled gravely.

"But he was right. He struck a fundamental truth without knowing it. And neither of you realize that one 'scratched' white man would act with the added cunning of civilization's training. For a fair fight, give me a pure, unadulterated savage."

"Great Scott! You've taken the thing seriously. Ross, you're not going in for writing stuff, are you?"

Ross laughed.

"Run along and forget it, old man. I'm going up to El Baño and take a dip."

"I'll join you," said Caldwell, looking at his watch. "It's about five, and we can be back in time for chow."

Presently the two men came out of the *comandancia* clad in light bath robes and carrying a supply of towels and soap. They paused to chaff Young Thomas. But he was deep in photographing a native beauty, so did not answer.

"That was Tietez," said Ross thoughtfully. "Young Thomas had better look out. He'll have Arguinedez to settle with."

"You mean Jack Traynor will," added Caldwell quickly.

An angry flush broke through the tan of Ross' forehead.

"I don't know what you mean," he said stiffly.

Caldwell shied a coconut husk at a sleeping pile of monkeys. They walked on in silence. Presently he continued:

"Oh, yes, you do. But you won't admit it. Now, be reasonable, Ross, and confess that your hero's tiptoes are made of clay—very fine clay, I grant you, but *clay*. Even if Jack Traynor is your chum and your future brother-in-law, he has been indiscreet in monopolizing Tietez at native dances, following her after mass, and all the rest of the fool civilized things that makes any savage woman his slave. Tietez was a good wife to Arguinedez before Traynor came down."

"Jack's engaged to a girl in New York."

"And New York's a hell of a long ways from Leyte, Philippine Islands."

Only the shrill cry of a tropical bird answered him. A few minutes later, Ross burst forth:

"Well, suppose he has flirted with Tietez—she's pretty and a fool. Jack's not a cad."

"No, he's as good as they come. But Arguinedez is a savage, who is married to Tietez. You know what happened at Tacloban, that bolo affair. And the girl wasn't half as foolish as Tietez. If I were you, Ross, I'd drop Traynor a quiet hint to fight shy of Tietez. I've been watching Arguinedez for some time, and he acts ugly. He's only a recent convert, too. You can never bank on them. I've been out here a trifle longer than any of you boys, and I know the ways of the brown brother. Take it from me, Ross, make Tietez as neglected by the handsome American as she has been popular."

Ross bit his under lip to keep his temper. He knew that Caldwell spoke the truth. Traynor had flirted with Tietez, and Arguinedez was dangerous. Ross had been glad when Traynor went in search of a desperado. It would give Arguinedez a chance to cool down, and he had meant to tell Traynor to keep out of the affair.

"I know you resent my telling you," said Caldwell humbly, "but——"

Impulsively Ross turned, and held out his hand.

"You were right—I mustn't keep Jack on a pedestal eternally. It's because he's Amy's brother that makes me feel the way I do. And I'm worried like the devil about him. A dozen things could happen—suppose the guides turned traitor?"

Caldwell wisely changed the subject. They talked of the last trip to Tacloban, when they had fresh beef and cold beer for mess, when they heard the year-old phonograph record of "Kelly and His Green Necktie" and "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now," when they thumbed over six-month-old issues of American magazines, and read the last steamer's mail, and compared heights and weights and growing bald spots. After all, whether it be the Philippine Islands or Herald Square or Painted Post, men are men, and the joy of living is not lessened.

"It wouldn't seem bad to trot down the old campus with a freshman cap on," remarked Ross, as they neared El Baño. "You know I've an idea that when Amy and I go back next year, being out here will seem a faint, indistinct sort of dream. We'll settle down among old friends just as if we had never strayed out of God's country. I tell you, Caldwell, there's nothing like civilization. A whirl out here shows it up pretty white."

Caldwell laughed.

"That's what I thought a few years ago, but I've grown into the life now, and, all things considered, I don't think I'd care to go back."

Ross shook his head.

"That's because all things are not equal with you, boy. You've come out wrong, somehow, and you'd rather stay out here and keep your troubles lulled to sleep. You battered old warrior, sometimes I think you're afraid to go back."

With a shade paler face, Caldwell drawled:

"Perhaps. Anyhow, here we are.

Who do you suppose is in the bath—I think I hear the water running."

"Won't take long to find out." Ross was leaping over dry brush and mounting piles of stone. "Hi, there!" He turned back to laugh at Caldwell. "Here's a civilized habit nothing could deprive me of—a cold tub."

"What would make you revert to savagery?" retorted Caldwell, pelting him with pebbles.

"Oh, a couple of nasty little things that some poor devils are victims to. Hello, inside; who is it—a stranger or a——"

The water was pouring down steadily. Ross and Caldwell hesitated before entering the steep ravine. The natural bathtub was one of the sure signs that the Creator had not forgotten tubby officers stationed near the equator. Situated in a deep ravine, in the crater of a dead volcano, entirely surrounded by tall, even rocks, the "tub" contained a multitude of "faucets" or streams of water varying in temperature. By skillful manipulation, one could move the stones until they might have a smarting, cold bath—the bottom of the "tub" being even, clean stones—or by displacing other stones, the water would grow warmer, very warm, hot. By moving a small boulder, a volcanic stream was released, which poured down its scalding, sulphurous substance without end. The stream was wedged in by the boulder, although Ross had suggested having it more securely sealed.

Besides the officers who regarded El Baño as a curio, the "tub" was used by only a few of the officers, whose trained fingers had learned to remove the stones as deftly as they turned on their nickel-plated faucets at home.

As the men climbed up on top of the stones, they stopped to listen.

"That's the volcanic stream," said Caldwell softly. "I can smell the rotten sulphur. The boulder's fallen!"

A chattering gray monkey peered from behind a rock. It screamed loudly at them.

"What luck!" muttered Ross. "I knew that'd come some time. Let's look

down at it—careful, old chap; those gases are bad to breathe.”

They climbed up on top of the rocks to peer over. Suddenly Ross fell back against Caldwell.

“What’s up?”

He gave a shrill scream, something like the gray monkey’s call. His long, knotted hands waved frantically at the hissing, seething pool below. Caldwell bent down to look. The steady, sulphurous stream was flowing relentlessly over a long, bulky object. The object wore heavy cavalry boots, and spurs marked deeply with a J. T. A hand, strapped to a heavy tree limb, was seen dimly through the vapors. Hideous shreds of cooked clothing were visible to Caldwell’s terror-stricken eyes, and he thanked God that the object’s face was covered with a mangled, boiling felt hat. The body must have been placed there several hours, bound and gagged, and left to scald slowly. Even Caldwell’s hardened nerves were quivering. He reached out a cold hand to touch Ross’ shaking arm.

“S-steady, old man!” he managed to gasp. “It’s—Arguinedez’s work—the brown devil—”

Ross flung off the other’s hand. The pupils of the steel-gray eyes were the size of pin points, and his cheek bones crunched like an animal’s.

“It’s the scratch!” was all he answered.

Caldwell mercifully drew him away. Still the sulphurous liquid poured through the porous rock. The treacherous Mahagnao volcano served the natives well. A small cardcase was lying on a neighboring rock. Ross stooped to pick it up. It was Traynor’s.

Neither man spoke. The gug, gug, gurgle of the boiling water bathing that object below drowned all human sound. The uncanny, weird whistle of the monkeys, the high, wailing screech of the birds, the solemn waving of the great trees inclosing El Baño—all mourned for the dead man.

Mechanically Ross searched through the cardcase, thumbing over the half dozen soiled cards, the frayed newspaper clippings, and the snapshot of a

dark-haired girl. Caldwell watched him, fascinated, fearful lest the savage look return.

“Let’s go back. We must get—that out of here.” Ross’ voice was mechanical, calm.

Obediently Caldwell turned, and they climbed down the steep rock steps.

“Which way?” he whispered.

“The sulphur bed—the sulphur bed—I want to cross it!”

Blindly Caldwell followed the tall, trembling figure that went stumbling over the patches of rock and desert waste. There were two ways of returning. One the same as by which they came, the other by the tabooed sulphur bed. The bed emanated from the volcano, and was peculiar to the Mahagnao region. Men have lost their lives crossing it, still more have lost their reason. Something in the stifling, sizzling gas clouds the brain as well as the lungs. You feel yourself on the brink of hell with all other exits barred.

But Caldwell followed. And when the men stood gasping in the middle of the burning, vomiting orchard of gas, Ross turned to him, and said solemnly:

“This is what *he* suffered, only ten thousand times more. This was Arguinedez’s way of getting even. And Arguinedez is a savage. A savage would not kill before he scalds. Only white men would shoot a merciful bullet. Listen to me”—he lurched over a mound of sand—“I, too, am a savage. And Arguinedez will pay the price.”

The coconut trees were seen in the distance. Fifteen minutes more and the *comandancia* would be in sight. Caldwell planned to give Ross the stiffest drink of whisky he had ever mixed, and a jab or so of the needle. Then they would make him sleep, and send back for poor Traynor’s body, and when Ross wakened they would lie to him, and tell him that even after the scalding a bullet hole was to be seen in his dead friend’s temple. When Caldwell made up his mind to tell a lie, he usually made a thorough job of it.

“I am a savage.” Ross repeated the sentence with a force that Caldwell could not but fear. “It’s not yellow

skin against white skin; it's red blood against red blood. It's man to man—savage to savage!" He laughed as he spat out a mouthful of nauseous gas. "You think I'm crazy; you think you're going to persuade me to let the law take its course. You think I'm going to stand by and see Traynor's death answered with a deadly, gentle bullet, shot at so many paces. Well, I'm not! You're not going to stop me, either. I came over the sulphur bed to prove that the 'scratch' went deep; to prove what *he* must have suffered. I want the delight of making Arguinedez suffer the same—d'ye hear, Caldwell? I'm going to bring him back to El Baño, and tie his rotting fingers, and gag his hellish, heathen mouth, and I'm going to pitch him into the sulphur stream and let—"

Caldwell caught him before he tumbled against a jagged rock. They were on the edge of the bed now. Ross rallied, pulling himself away from the other's hold.

"Don't touch me," he said, with a ghastly attempt at a grin. "I'm not your own kind any longer—I'm a savage, a reverted type. I'll prove your argument." He snatched the dead man's cardcase out of his pocket, and held it against his cheek. "She's coming in the morning," he said brokenly, sobbing like a child. "She's coming, and we'll have to tell her. Oh, my God—and the scalds, the scalds—did you see his face, Caldwell? Tell me the truth, or I'll choke you—did you see it? Was it raw or colorless or like cooked beef? Was any of the flesh left on it? How long d'ye suppose they'd left him there? How long d'ye suppose he could cry for help and s-say his prayers—his Christian prayers to forgive a heathen dog? How long d'ye suppose he was conscious?"

Young Thomas, strolling about the grove, noticed Ross' staggering walk, and came forward.

"I watched you coming from the left," he yelled. "You didn't skirt the sulphur crop, did you?"

Caldwell beckoned him to take hold on the other side and help. As they

carried Ross up the steps, Young Thomas murmured apologetically: "The cholera scare has struck here, too. The natives are getting ready for a San Roque for to-night. They tell me it's a procession of all their images and relics as an offering to the cholera god. Did Ross have a tumble? He feels cold."

Inside the *comandancia*, Ross snatched the whisky decanter, and drank as if it were water. All that he would mumble was something about being a savage, and that when the San Roque took place he could find his man.

Young Thomas turned sick like a schoolgirl when Caldwell told him. For a minute he believed it was some horrible nightmare that he was experiencing during a stormy time at sea. Things went black around him; only Caldwell's steady, brown eyes proved reliable.

"What kind of a country is this?" he demanded hoarsely.

Caldwell grinned.

"Don't you know?" he asked, in a grating voice. "This is the land of scratches, the land where the white man is made savage, and the savage is made white man."

Outside came a stir of the natives making ready for their San Roque.

"Look at them," added Caldwell bitterly. "They'll parade all around the village with their wax images of the saints and the Virgin Mary; they'll put cornstalks in their beds, and sleep underneath so that the cholera god will not find them, but will kill the cornstalk dummy instead; they'll pin sheets around the cots of the dying victims so that the cholera god may be cheated out of seeing them die; they'll take a white man and scald him to death because he flirted with a native woman, and then we must take the law, the civilized law of the *Americanos*, to deal with them. Oh, you'll learn a lot out here, boy, if you stay."

Ross threw the whisky decanter on the floor. They jumped at the crash of glass.

"He's turned back to savagery," answered Caldwell. "He swears he's going to take Traynor's murderer, and

treat him to the same fate. Traynor's sister, his fiancée, comes in the morning."

"I've got to send back to El Baño for—for the body," he told Young Thomas. "Will you go with the men? I—can't, I'd fluke."

Young Thomas stood upright, the solemn obligation of his office was very clear.

"I'll go," he said simply.

"Bury it—anywhere," answered Caldwell brokenly. "And tell Ross that you found a bullet mark in—it—in his temple."

"You think that will make him change?" asked Young Thomas.

"It's a try. If he thinks he was shot first he may come to reason."

Young Thomas shook his head.

"You forget," he said quietly; "Ross said that a 'scratched' white man would outstrip a normal savage. Bullet or no bullet, Ross won't change."

Meantime Ross had disappeared, and when Caldwell went in search of him he saw only the shreds of a leather card-case and a shattered whisky bottle. The *muchacho* told him the lieutenant had torn out of the *comandancia*, and was talking to four of the natives; another of the tao reported that he had given orders to the troops to see that no native failed to appear at the San Roque.

Caldwell met him coming back. He was startled to see the poised air with which he walked and to hear firm, almost hearty tones say:

"Don't worry, Caldwell; I've not gone loco yet. Have you sent back for—"

Caldwell assured him that he had, that Young Thomas had taken hold like a thoroughbred. He urged Ross to take a jab of the needle. Somehow this calmness was more alarming than the brutal raging.

Presently drums sounded outside the *comandancia*, and rude fagot torches, unneeded under the tropical sky, flared up angrily. A low, whining chant was heard. The padre, dressed in purple robes of mourning, came at the head of the procession. Behind him, on rude

litters, and carried by the tao, were the images of the saints, relics of holy times, religious pictures, and symbols. The entire church had been stripped of its finery to appease the cholera god, to ask that he pass over their village and harm them not.

Last of all came the statue of the Virgin Mary, wreathed with foliage and burdened with fresh flowers. Behind this filed the tao, the troops, and a handful of native normal school-teachers.

Caldwell came out on the steps to receive them—a common custom during times of cholera scare. His arms shook as he steadied himself against the pillars, and the padre wondered at the horror he found written on the officer's bronzed face.

"Honorable lieutenant," began the padre's soft Spanish voice, "we do ask your commendation for this procession of our people, pleading with the heavenly—"

"Stop!"

Ross' voice sounded from behind like a clarion call. The padre murmured in surprise. The natives looked up in horror—the cholera god liked neither interruptions nor reprimands. The cholera god ruled with a will of iron, and in the village below all but the constabulary had been stricken. A town wiped out within four days.

"Stop!" he repeated, pushing Caldwell roughly to one side. "I have something to say to you all—push the litters back and come closer."

In the distance came the sound of a galloping horse. Ross turned in its direction.

"It's from—from—"

Caldwell nodded. With redoubled force, Ross continued in the native tongue:

"A horrible murder has been committed. Lieutenant Traynor has been scalded to death at El Baño—tied, gagged, bound to a tree limb, and thrown under the sulphur stream to die slowly. You hear—you all hear?"

A horrified murmur ran through the crowd, but to Caldwell's practiced senses he knew that every native in the

village had heard of it before. The sickish smell of the burning torches made him faint.

"The guilty one must be made to confess." Ross' voice sounded like a great church bell pealing at a distance. "Listen to me; the guilty man is to be made known to you all now. Stand in single file, every one of you, and when the procession passes by you, watch the miracle! When the blessed image of the Virgin passes the murderer, the image will totter on its base, shiver for shame, shake because of God's wrath toward such swine as he who killed Lieutenant Traynor. To your places—single file, every man, woman, child of you—to your places—single file, I said. No—not that way—single—a-ah, and when the Blessed Virgin tells me who has—"

He turned as he heard Young Thomas whisper breathlessly to Caldwell:

"It was gone—only the spurs were left—they'd taken it away completely—they must have been watching."

"A-ah!" It was a wild cry that Ross uttered. "You hear that—the officers have returned from El Baño; they say the body has been taken away; the murderer must have been watching. To your places—a-ah! Now, let the procession pass!"

Trembling, quivering, panting, as the leopard watches for its prey, so Ross bent his lithe form forward to watch the natives cross themselves reverently and scurry to their places. Second to the very end of the long file stood little Tietez, her baby wrapped in her arms. Last of all was Arguinedez, her husband.

The ponderous beating of drums, the wail of the chant, the scent of the incense, the low genuflections of the people—it seemed like an endless panorama repeating itself again and again in Caldwell's brain.

As the statue of the Virgin passed each person, brown hands were stretched out in appeal, in supplication, lest the statue tremble unjustly and thus accuse them of murder. Ross followed behind the statue—Caldwell be-

hind Ross. Young Thomas, panting, exhausted, stayed on the *comandancia* steps, and watched with strained, homesick eyes.

Little Tietez shrank back. Arguinedez stood boldly forward, the last in line. Down the long file the litters passed—to the very end. And then, without warning, the heavy waxen image tottered, and would have fallen across Arguinedez's chest.

A wave of hysterical stillness swept over the people, stillness such as comes only before a panic's roar breaks forth, a scarcely perceptible holding of the people's breath, as a child pauses before his first sob.

A frenzied flight followed. The natives prostrated themselves, calling out that God was their friend, that He would not punish them, too; that God and the *Americanos* were their friends.

Ross, dragging Arguinedez through the mob, smiled at the cowed altar boys, at the bewildered people, the agitated padre, the sobbing, moaning mass of human beings. Only little Tietez was calm and cold. Even Caldwell lost his head, and shouted in Spanish like the rest.

Into the *comandancia* Ross brought his prisoner—into the inner room, where he was bound, and gagged, and thrown in a corner. Outside, the padre and Caldwell were trying to convince the people that the cholera god would not come to their village if they would live righteous lives; that he would not be angry at having his procession interrupted. But the people would not be calmed. They cried out for Arguinedez, they demanded to see him.

Finally the troops quelled the riot, and, driven into their huts, sullen, unyielding, the natives crouched on their floors, and said defiant, old-time, pagan prayers to heathen gods.

Caldwell found himself next to little Tietez; he was sobbing like the rest, as the result of overstrained nerves. Looking down at her, he saw she was solemn, mystical looking; that her eyes were clear and dry.

"Tietez," he said roughly, "you've

sent two of the best men this country ever saw—to hell."

"A-ah!" sighed Tietez, walking swiftly away from him.

All night long Young Thomas and Caldwell sat beside Ross to see that he did no harm to himself. Stifled moans came from the prisoner, still crouched in the corner. Even the padre was denied admittance—the padre having discovered that the four tao carrying the litter of the Blessed Virgin had been bribed by Ross to push her forward. All night little Tietez and her baby waited on the *comandancia* steps, in hopes of seeing Arguinedez. Meanwhile Amy Traynor and her escort were traveling through the mangrove swamps, crossing treacherous coral bays flooded with yawning reptiles. It would be six months to-morrow since she had seen either Traynor or Ross.

Once during the night, Caldwell, thinking Ross to be asleep, touched Young Thomas on the shoulder.

"If she gets here first," he whispered, "she may persuade him not to—"

Young Thomas nodded—a strange, childish lump in his throat. Impossible as it sounds, Young Thomas experienced the same infantile fright that he had felt when shut up in dark closets in punishment for missing jam pots. He learned another fundamental truth as he sat inside the sultry *comandancia* watching a deranged man and a murderer—that it is the settings which change, not the sentiments. Even in the realization of what had happened, Young Thomas found that his terror was not more keen than at his first hazing party. Being young, in his voting years, he was ashamed of this fact, having expected army life would prove an open sesame to gripping, strange emotions. In reality, Young Thomas grew up that night, leaving behind him the last of boyhood's cherished illusions.

"Suppose he—doesn't?" he finally shaped his lips to say. "Won't there be a fearful row—about—doing such a thing?"

"One dead native won't get into the associated press," answered Caldwell

wearily. "No, Ross can do as he pleases as far as the law goes—who'd stop him? If we did, he'd be nasty. Paying back for Traynor's death is like cleaning out a sewer; it gets the poison out of his system. If we stopped him, do you suppose he'd ever keep his reason? He'd be a raving maniac for life."

"Maybe she can persuade him——" Young Thomas shuddered.

"No, she can't," said Ross unexpectedly. "I heard you talking—a fine plan, but it don't go. This touches me deeper than any woman's love. Arguinedez is mine."

Nothing else was said during the vigil. Ross drank brandy once, and another time he asked Arguinedez if he were guilty. The native nodded gravely, and Ross gave a curious, beast-like cry of triumph.

At five o'clock Amy Traynor, and the native guides, and a Manila army officer reached the *comandancia*. Caldwell met them without flinching, and in merciless, blunt words, told the story.

The Manila army officer had to be revived with whisky, and the native guides shrugged their shoulders in sardonic amusement. The *Americanos'* dislike for unconventional modes of death was a never-ending source of curiosity to them.

"Where—is Dan?" faltered Amy Traynor.

Then Caldwell told the rest of the story—Dan's story.

"No, no, Lieutenant Caldwell; you mustn't let him; you mustn't let him do such a thing—he's not himself—he's not——"

She stumbled into the inner room, regardless of the other's restraining arm. She threw her arms about Ross' stiffened figure.

"Dan, Dan, we've only got each other now—listen to me, dear, listen to——"

But Ross shook her off, a strange light in his bloodshot eyes. He stood upright, and gave some quick commands in Spanish.

"Dan, don't you think it's hard for me—— My God, you're insane!" Her

eyes fell on the imprisoned native, cowering in a corner.

"Listen to me, Amy," said Ross quietly, looking into her eyes—Jack's eyes were the same. "You can't understand, dear; you're a woman. Say you'll stay with Young Thomas until I come back."

"You're not going to do that—awful thing. Jack wouldn't want it—he wouldn't let you—he'll——"

Ross shoved her aside. She followed him blindly.

"Dan, listen to me—I can marry no murderer!"

Ross stalked ahead. Four regulars lifted Arguinedez, and bore him down the steps.

"I can marry no murderer," she sobbed wildly. "Remember, if you do this thing, I can never, never look at you again—I, Jack's sister——"

The soldiers unbound Arguinedez's feet, permitting him to walk. Ross and Caldwell mounted ponies. Little Tietez crept up beside Amy Traynor. Her dark eyes showed scorn at the other's emotion. She pointed to the bound figure walking between the two ponies. But the tall, fair-haired girl paid no attention.

Young Thomas managed to get her back into the *comandancia*; he was shaking like a leaf himself. He knew that a girl who would travel through the Mahagnao district would ask questions in a way that merciful lies would not answer.

Over the rocky, uneven earth, the other procession moved. When they reached the edge of the sulphur bed, Ross dismissed the men. Caldwell and he would take the prisoner on alone. Regretfully the others turned back. Regretfully Caldwell followed. He and Ross were on foot now. Over the horrible, spitting mounds of sulphurous earth the three stumbled. Once Caldwell felt his legs shake from beneath him—but he pressed onward. Once Ross turned and smiled at him. Caldwell felt a shiver creep down his spine. And remember, Caldwell was a veteran. Only the brown prisoner was mute. Not once did he falter.

When they reached the miniature precipice of rocks surrounding El Baño, Caldwell made a break. He took Ross by the shoulders firmly, and looked deep into the gray, angry eyes.

"You've got to shoot this man first," he said slowly, tightening his grip on Ross' shoulders. "You've got to shoot him—dead. Then throw him to the four winds, if you want to. But you're not going to let savage passion get the upper hand. You're going to shoot him like the trained American soldier that you are, shoot him the way Traynor would have ordered done. And you're coming back with me, and tell Amy Traynor that you were not yourself. You'll have to apologize pretty strong, at that. You're going to help her bear this sorrow. Then you're going to get a leave of absence, and romp up to Manila, and do and see all sorts of foolish, civilized things. And you are going to make yourself believe that Traynor was shot dead himself before he was thrown into the sulphur stream. D'ye hear that? He was shot dead before he was thrown into the sulphur stream. After a little while, you'll marry Amy Traynor, and you'll—you'll name your first boy—Jack. And for God's sake, get a transfer to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, or some place in the middle of a white man's country. I—I can't go over that sulphur bed again." Caldwell's face was gray.

Ross did not answer. Presently the other continued:

"If you won't do this, Ross, I'm going to take the initiative. I'm not going to see you slide over the divide. Not much. Scratches heal. Answer me, will you shoot Arguinedez?"

It seemed as if every monkey in the island must have whistled back an opinion, as if every bird hissed out its unasked answer before Ross said thickly: "No."

Still Caldwell held his grip.

"All right; then you'll thank yourself for what happens. I'm in better trim than you. Arguinedez and I can put up a good battle——"

"You'd fight for—that?"

Ross' lips curved like a hungry ani-

mal's, and his nostrils were quivering and distended.

"Can't you understand?" Caldwell let, unashamed, tears roll down his bronzed cheeks. "I'm making a play for your reason, for your civilization. Like the owner of tame tigers, I'm not going to let you taste raw meat!"

Ross hung his head, his breath came in slow, irregular gulps. The conflict was taking place. Civilization was slowly gaining her lost hold.

"I've humored you pretty much, Ross. I've done whatever I thought was reasonable. I've let you give full vent to your first mad outburst; I've let you antagonize the padre and the people, and run chances of a hellish outbreak of the tao. But not this—for your own sake, for the sake of American citizenship—not this—not this—for her sake—for—"

Still the shrill call of the monkeys, still the uneven, gulping sighs. Caldwell relaxed his hold; he stepped back beside the silent, waiting savage.

Slowly Ross raised his head.

"All right," he mumbled. "You puncture his hide first—you do it, Cald—afterward—"

"Afterward, do what you will."

"Crawl up first and see if the stream is on—full."

Ross' teeth seemed to bite each other as he spoke. Obediently Caldwell climbed upward, Ross following. Only twelve hours since they had both looked below into El Baño's depths.

This time, both men lay on their stomachs, wriggling to the ledge. They heard a steady splash of water—water that sounded like cold, clear mountain streams.

A strong tenor voice shouted upward:

"Hello, old chaps! I'm some done up—no clothes left to speak of. Come on in till I tell you what happened at the swamps. I got the man, though—oh, yes, that was the easiest part."

Jack Traynor's straight-featured, pleasant face smiled up at them. Ross and Caldwell clutched each other. Both had always been skeptics regarding spirit communication.

"You act as if you had pains in your tummies," continued Traynor, slapping the cool water vigorously. "And how did the bowlder fall out? Who put it back? I can see the fresh scratches. Who left my spurs here? I thought I heard voices on the outside, but these rocks act as sounding boards for the monks and—what's up? Come down! Wait, I'll come up. Ross, Ross—Caldy—"

His athletic figure clambered out of the tub, grabbing a stray article of tattered clothing. Ross and Caldwell remained spellbound on the rocks, not daring to look at each other. Caldwell remembered similar cases of hallucination resultant of crossing the sulphur bed too often.

Presently a very human, wet person slapped them on the shoulders. "What's old Arguinedez done?" demanded the tenor voice. "He looks like the leader of the Pharaoh league. Ross, you've been on a bust, and a bad one, too."

Ross gripped his hand.

"You're not—dead?" he whispered.

"Not much, but pretty shaken up. I sent the scouts on ahead, and dropped off here. We were lost in the jungle for a week, and had a bad time following our noses. Who spread the death scare? No such luck! Has Amy come? Ross—what's happened? Don't look like that! Ross—Caldy, tell me what's on the mat?"

For the second time that day, Caldwell told the story, sparing no details. Traynor listened with serious eyes, now and then patting Ross on the shoulder. When he finished, Traynor bent down to say gently:

"So you were going to join the heathen band and with the heathen sing? All for my sake? Old chap, I'll have to be good—"

But Ross had burst into loud, tearing sobs that made Traynor frantic, and Caldwell glad. Caldwell knew the symptoms; civilization had sent tears as her sign of victory.

By and by some one remembered to untie Arguinedez, and shake him in a congratulatory fashion. But not until

Traynor said the cholera scare was a fake, did he open his dry, parched lips, and explain the mystery.

To appease the almighty cholera god, the natives had decided secretly to offer up a dummy, modeled after an American army officer. Thus they would make the cholera god believe they would scald to death a white man, as a slight token of their esteem. Surely this would have great weight with so vain a god.

And clever brown hands had stolen the absent Traynor's clothes, even to his cardcase; clever brown hands had fashioned his figure out of straw and cloth; stronger hands placed the figure under the sulphur stream, and prayed that the cholera god might never know it was only straw and cloth instead of flesh and blood.

They had watched the Americans discover it; they had taken it away before the Americans had learned the trick. For the cholera god, once knowing it to be a trick and not a mortal scalded for his august pleasure, would surely revenge himself by ravaging their entire village.

Even when Arguinedez was dragged to the *comandancia*, after his accusation by the blessed image, any confession of the hoax was out of the question. Pagan stoicism was paramount; better one native die scalded than to let the cholera god know they had deceived him. The only point which puzzled the people was: How did the blessed image know that it had been Arguinedez who had placed the dummy in El Baño? Was it possible they had been clever enough to fool all heaven, in addition

to the cholera god? Was it a sign that heaven liked such proceedings? Such is the tangled thread of savage logic!

That night Amy Traynor came out on the *comandancia* steps; she had waited until Ross was deep in peaceful sleep. Caldwell, still quivering inside, placed a mat beside him on the broad step.

"Lieutenant," she asked, as she watched with happy eyes her brother talking to Young Thomas, "why did Arguinedez choose Jack as a copy for the object of sacrifice? Is that a compliment?"

Caldwell looked up at the stars complacently. He knew that civilization's restraining finger made the jealous Arguinedez stop from actually dragging the white man into El Baño; that savagery's impelling force made him willing to be the medium for destroying the white man's image. And he was glad Traynor was going home on a furlough, along with Ross and Amy, and that little Tietez had seemed honestly glad to welcome back her husband. He was glad they were all going, even though he would be very much alone. He thought all this, while searching for a suitable answer for the girl beside him. Because, as Ross had told her, she was but a woman, who might not understand.

"Well?" she demanded imperatively.

Caldwell laughed nervously, the pulses in his forehead still beating like trip hammers.

"Pro-probably," he stammered, "Arguinedez didn't have a chance—to s-steal any one else's—clothes!"



THE PRESENT NEED

IF you would grant me joy for coming years,
Make no glad promise what thy love shall be,
But give me now the love that stays all fears,
And future days from question shall be free.

ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH.

LARGELY JEWELRY



By
**Frank
Condon**

THERE is a fine, old-fashioned street near Washington Square lined on either side with red-brick houses and sandstone stoops on which, in the long-gone days, men with lace around their wrists sat, and smoked, and made love to feminine persons in hoopskirts, and discussed Jeff Davis, the price of flour, and the bad bus service. The old street has its memories, and it is proud of them, and ashamed of its present shabby-genteel appearance, for the red-brick houses are now nothing but shelter for impecunious boarders of very small means, who some day hope to move uptown and reside in flats.

Into this street came Nellie Forest, carrying a large, brown bag. She stopped before the entrance of nine hundred and sixteen, hesitated, and was lost. Nine-sixteen enveloped her at once. She disappeared within its somber doorway as the helpless rabbit is assimilated by the hungry boa constrictor.

Ten days later there appeared another stranger at the end of the street. He wandered along uncertainly, glancing now and then at a slip of paper, which he gripped with determination and fear, and when he came to nine hundred and seventeen, he walked confidently up the sandstone steps and pulled the tarnished bell. A girl with green eyes opened the door five inches, parleyed, summoned another person

from mysterious depths, opened the door another ten inches, and Otto Flanigan sidled into his first New York City home.

Thereafter the chain of events was linkless for a matter of three weeks. Daily, a small, self-effacing young woman emerged from nine-sixteen, and set forth into the city in quest of employment. Daily, Otto Flanigan hustled down the steps of nine-seventeen, and wandered about the purlieus of commerce and merchandizing in the cheerful hope of making a business connection.

On Thursday evening, Miss Forest returned to her home with a smile of contentment and happiness upon her rosy countenance, and on Friday, Otto Flanigan got a job—a very fine job, at ten dollars a week, in the shipping department of a wholesale grocery concern.

When the days grew warmer, the boarders came out in little groups, and sat on the stoops. The women began to wear white waists with sleeves not quite to their elbows, and the men packed away vests and suspenders till another winter, and gloried in striped negligee shirts and crocodile belts. The stoopers of nine-seventeen gazed with mild curiosity across the way, and the stoopers of nine-sixteen gazed back with equally polite interest.

Otto Flanigan, sitting on a grass mat and smoking luxuriously at a three for five, selected the girl with the rosy coun-

tenance for particular scrutiny. She appeared to exceeding advantage, and, as the nights passed, he began to feel a proprietary interest, and on the few evenings she failed to appear he was needlessly worried.

The Englishman in nine-seventeen—there is inevitably an Englishman in a Washington Square boarding house—remarked to Otto:

"She's rawther pretty, isn't she?"

"What do you know about her?" Otto replied, with hostility.

"Why, nothing, of course, old chap," the Englishman answered, a bit surprised. "I merely remarked that she was rawther pretty."

"Sure, she is," said Otto gloweringly and without the cheerful intonation that induces further conversation. Whereupon the Englishman directed his talk to the cigar salesman from downtown.

After that, Otto discovered that the girl across the way left for business at eight o'clock, and, by putting on the fourth speed during the ham-and-eggs ceremonial each morning, he was enabled to follow her to the elevated station, at which place followed the daily catastrophe of her going uptown, while he sadly climbed into a downtown train.

On the evening of a June day blessed by the gods and goddesses, seraphs, cherubs, sprites, and billikens, he turned into the street, carrying nothing but his usual six-o'clock appetite. Half a block before him Nellie Forest hurried along toward the creamed codfish and black tea of nine-sixteen, and in her arms was a bundle of irregular shape and fat proportions. The little billikens leaped into the breach; the bundle slipped from Nellie's arms, and fell in an ignominious and unwrapped heap.

Otto made the next hundred yards in ten and two-fifths, and reached the scene of desolation before Nellie stooped over.

"Let me pick it up," he said breathlessly. "I'm a regular pick-up of busted parcels."

Nellie blushed, and said, "no, never mind," "it's nothing," "I can do it myself, and "don't bother" all at once. The

fallen bundle leered up at the two in shameless effrontery. White things, all wrinkled and starched, escaped from behind the paper—things that Otto knew very little about, but which will make any girl blush, especially when a strange man is picking them up in broad daylight on an open street. But Otto gallantly shut his eyes, gathered up the parcel, and retied it with skill and confusion.

"There," he said, placing it in her arms. "Good as new, and not a bit of the laundry soiled. It's a hot day, ain't it? I know who you are. You're the girl in nine-sixteen. I've been looking over at you ever since I moved in. My name's Otto Flanigan, and I come from Columbus. It's a hot day, ain't it?"

Exhausted by the flow of his speech, he pushed his cap back and grinned amiably. Without realizing it, without having the faintest notion of physical effort required or of the activity of the motor nerves directing the movement, Otto and Nellie were walking along the street side by side.

"Columbus, did you say?" Miss Forest inquired, disregarding Mr. Flanigan's ideas and queries about the weather.

"Yes, I'm from Columbus. Do you know anybody there?"

"I ought to," she answered smilingly. "I'm from Columbus myself."

"You are—you are?" Otto said, in astonishment. "Now, what do you think of that! My father was a policeman in the old Fifth Ward. Did you ever hear of Detective Flanigan? Didn't you ever see his name in the paper? He's dead now."

"I think I used to hear of him. Our family lived out near Walbridge Park. My name is Nellie Forest."

"Did you have a cousin or a brother or somebody who was an usher in the Peoples' Theater?" Otto continued enthusiastically. "His name was Bill Forest. He used to let me in for nothing. Why, we know each other, kind of, don't we? Ain't it the limit about you living at nine-sixteen, right across the street from me? How long have

you been there? How long have you been in New York?"

But the discoverers had reached the severe portals of nine-sixteen, and Miss Forest halted.

"It's time for my supper," she said. "I'll have to leave you now, or I won't get any."

"Mine, too," he laughed. "If you haven't anything to do after supper, why not let's take a walk somewhere? Let's go over in the park and talk about things. It's going to be a fine night."

Nellie reflected long enough to produce the effect of feminine reserve, and then consented. Otto hurried home, ate his supper without going through the usual processes of mastication, inserted himself into his best shirt, selected his finest and smoothest cravat, brushed his teeth, fixed his nails, rubbed off his shoes, and presented himself ninety minutes later as a formal evening caller for Miss Forest. They walked to the park, sat on a bench, rediscovered Columbus, Ohio, discoursed upon the wonders of the great city of New York, gave and accepted an invitation to the moving pictures, made personal remarks about each other in a politely complimentary way, and did everything that two young persons of opposite sexes do when they are passing through the pallid preliminaries of falling in love.

On the second evening, Otto held Nellie's hand for at least ten seconds more than the time required for a complete handshake. On the sixth evening he kissed her, and on the eighth evening she returned the kiss, and there you are!

Centuries of undiluted bliss followed in the next few months. Never was there a more faithful and devoted swain—never a happier or prouder sweetheart. Otto toiled diligently in the shipping department of the wholesale grocery, and Nellie went to her duties as cashier in an uptown restaurant. They had delightful excursions into the country. They took long ocean voyages to Coney Island. They visited the theaters and moving-picture houses. Otto showered Nellie with trinkets, and

Nellie purchased for Otto a beautiful watch fob of silk, with golden curls.

When her birthday came it brought her a gold locket with her initials carved on the back, and a bright pearl in the center. Otto was particularly pleased with his selection, and invested a generous part of his salary in it. Furthermore, he bestowed upon her a ring containing three garnets, and she reciprocated with a birthday gift—a stickpin of gold, with a small diamond surrounded by tiny pearls.

Otto had begun to weave an investigating course through the "furnished-apartment" columns of the daily papers—not with any definite idea of immediate marriage in mind, but simply to gratify a newly awakened curiosity; and his affairs, amorous and business, were flowing along through the smoothest of waters, under the sunniest of skies, when a sudden blow fell, and his craft was swamped. He lost his job. The office manager handed him the fateful blue envelope, and he gathered up his old pipe, some rusty pens, and receipted bills, and passed out of the shipping department of the wholesale grocery house.

"I'll have another job in a week," he reflected, "and there ain't any particular sense in telling Nellie about it until I'm landed again. She'll only worry, and that'll make me feel worse. Just when I was going to ask for an increase, I get the hook. I hope the company fails."

There is a certain foolish pride in some men that frequently steers them into the rocks of trouble. If it is part of a man's make-up, there is no steering at it, because it's bound to have a hand in the game. Otto began his bluff cheerfully. He accompanied Nellie to the elevated station each morning, waited until she departed on an uptown train, and then wandered slowly back to the boarding house, where he wrote innumerable responses to advertisements in the "help-wanted" departments. He haunted the business houses downtown, and walked the soles of his shoes into the paper-thin stage. He

placed his own modest "wanted, work of any kind" advertisement in the paper, and waited for answers that never came, and in the course of time his little reserve fund ran out, and he found himself gazing with melancholy and contempt upon his last, hard, thin dime.

It was then that his calls across the street began to grow fewer. Not once had he, by word or act, intimated to his sweetheart that all was not well, and the wholesale grocery business was struggling along without him. She had talked to him fondly and proudly of his future—pictured him mounting to positions of eminence and affluence in the world of canned peaches and dried prunes, and after he had fallen among the ranks of the unemployed her blithe predictions stung him, turned him to bitterness, and increased the strength of his determination to keep the bad news from her.

His six-evening schedule dropped off, and he made excuses to his sweetheart for calling only three times a week—good, valid business reasons, that were fully believed for a time. They no longer attended the moving-picture shows, and the trolley-car rides were things of the wealthy past. Nellie noticed, and wondered, but said nothing. What did pain her was Otto's continued and increasing absences, and the growing weakness of his excuses. He no longer appeared with a bunch of posies or some fifty-cent trinket—there came a time when he no longer appeared at all, and the little god of love laid himself down on the pavement and wept.

Otto was hungry. Certain changes in his financial affairs had made it necessary for him to remove himself from the list of boarders at nine-seventeen, and he became merely a lodger. This operation reduced his weekly expense considerably; it also reduced his waistline. His laundry began to show signs of inattention, and the Columbus suit of clothes took on the appearance of approaching dissolution. And, as a result of it all, he hid himself away from his sweetheart. One day, he packed up, moved over to the great East Side, and found a cubby-hole

room for which he paid seventy-five cents a week.

"I can never let her see me like I am now," he determined. "I'm going to hit the uptrail after a while, and when I look like a decent citizen I'll go back and explain the whole business. She'll think more of me than ever. I'm going to miss her terribly, but I can't bear to have her think that I'm a failure—and pretty near a bum."

At nine-sixteen, a little, red-eyed maiden placed a different interpretation upon events. In the evenings she sat, wide-eyed and silent, in her little upper chamber, and gazed across the street at nine-seventeen, and on very rare occasions she saw a hurrying young man going in or leaving. Then she cried a while, and looked at herself in the cracked mirror to see if she could find out what had made Otto weary of her. What had she done? Why had it all happened? If he had grown tired of her, if he no longer cared for her, why had he not come to her and told her so? After repeating these questions less than a million times, as other maids have done before now, and as they will do till the day the stars fall, Nellie summoned her pride, and attempted to push the whole subject from her.

"I thought he loved me—I thought he loved me," she repeated, after she had dismissed the subject for all time.

Then she would go to bed and gaze at the murky ceiling until the girl knocked on her door in the morning. In the evenings she had a great deal of time to think about it; during the day her thoughts were occupied with cash-register slips and shiftless persons who tried to short-change her.

Then came an era when the practice of eating must have temporarily ceased. Nellie's restaurant was not as crowded during the noon rush. The fat-jowled proprietor retrenched by the simple process of reducing a board of three eight-hour lady cashiers to two twelve-hour toilers behind the gold-and-glass booth. Nellie's position was the net gain, and her seven dollars a week went to the restaurant. Nellie went home to nine-sixteen, and wondered why all a

girl's troubles seem to pile upon her at once.

Separated by fifty blocks of happy, contented, working people, Otto and Nellie went their ways until, in the course of time, each was on the hard, rough road of actual want. Nellie moved to cheaper quarters, and began disposing of her various trinkets through the time-honored institution without which part of New York would continually starve—the pawnshop. Into its squalid, grasping, chill-producing atmosphere, she carried her trifling treasures and obtained a few nickels. She searched industriously for employment, but the gates were closed against her; and one day, with tear-dimmed eyes, she laid two objects on the counter before the hawk-faced automaton in the pawnshop. One of them was a locket of the roman gold, with a bright pearl in the center, and the other was a ring containing three garnets.

"I don't like to part with them," she said unnecessarily, "but I'll redeem them soon."

The pawnbroker smiled. On the carbon sheets of his intellect it was an old, sad phrase.

"A dollar for both of them," he said, without interest.

Nellie departed, with the bill crumpled in her fingers. She looked at it occasionally as though there was something wonderful about it, but it was only a soiled, worn dollar bill that had been lying in a pawnbroker's drawer.

Five blocks away there was another pawnshop. If Nellie had known, she might have wandered by this other shop, and if she had looked carefully in through the dirty glass of the window, she would have seen among the rusty revolvers and compasses and tarnished metal hand bags, a watch fob of silk with golden curlicues, and, beside it, a stickpin with a small diamond surrounded by tiny pearls. Otto had found this pawnshop weeks before—it was a favorite shop because he believed he obtained more money for his pledges.

Nothing is absolutely bottomless. Otto slid downward until he began to examine the surface of the North River

with a speculative eye, and then he touched ground and started up. His first job was in a garage, where he manicured soiled limousines, and poured gasoline into the tanks of the predatory rich. His next evolution brought him into the construction department of a contracting concern, and eventually he was helping a foreman who knew nothing in the world but steel girders and skyscrapers. Prosperity, of a comparative, but none the less marvelous, sort, smote him in midriff, and he clutched it.

Being a young man of steady habits and nonfondness for drink, he stepped along cheerily, and in six months he found himself in two furnished rooms, surrounded by all the food a growing young man can dispose of.

When he was eight cold dollars ahead of the game, he sought out the pawnshop and consorted again with the watch fob and the stickpin. Then he hurried on his way to nine-sixteen, and discovered what you and I already know. Nellie had left no address. On his thoughtful way home, he passed another pawnshop, and stopped with the sneer of satisfaction that belongs to a man who is finished with pawnbrokers. On the shelf inside he noticed a roman gold locket and a ring with three garnets, and something inside him broke suddenly.

"That's it, is it? She couldn't wait. I must have been strong with her if she couldn't last a few months without hocking the stuff. And I've been lying in bed awake for weeks praying for the time when I could go back to her—go back and tell her the whole story, and pick up things where they dropped. I'll bet she never cared for me. She's probably got another fellow, and, to show him and herself what she thought of the old one, she soaked the presents. Well, I was a sucker, all right. They can't stand absence—they can't stand absence!"

At the moment of his desolation, Nellie Forest was sitting in a Broadway restaurant with a good-looking young man who operated the typewriter at the desk next to hers. He was a very at-

tractive young man, with blue eyes and pale hair, and he had been kind and attentive to her ever since she had entered the firm's employment. He had helped her with her shorthand, and it was largely through his aid that she had been advanced from four dollars a week as plain office girl to fifteen as one of the regular stenographers.

"There is one thing I would like to do to-night," Nellie said to the young man after they had finished the coffee. "It may sound queer to you, but, of course, you know nothing about my affairs. In a little pawnshop downtown I have two ornaments that I would like to redeem. Will you go with me? The neighborhood isn't very select."

"I will be delighted," said the young man with the blue eyes.

They went—in a taxicab.

Three months later the Ancient Order of Amalgamated Buffaloes produced a masked ball at Schlitzer's Harlem Riding Academy. It was a grand, glorious, rampant event, and the chivalry and beauty of Bunkville-tween-the-Rivers were there.

At the north end of the hall a slender girl in a pale-blue gown stood waiting for her partner, breathing fast and happily. A man who was not her partner swung by with a tall young woman in his arms, and as he passed he threw a careless glance toward the slender one in blue. Then he casually waltzed his partner into a chair, and returned to the lone masked lady. Without introduction, he circled her with his arm and said:

"Finish this one with me, Nellie."

A startled gasp came from the red lips beneath the mask. The two whirled away, and the orchestra burst into a fresh Viennese importation.

"I saw the locket at your throat and the garnet ring," Otto explained. "I wondered why you got them out of hock. The last time I saw them they were in a certain window."

"Yes, they were in a certain window—one about five blocks away from the window that contained your watch fob and stickpin."

There was a moment's silence.

"Did you ever wonder why they were in pawn?" Nellie asked quietly.

"No, I knew. You quit waiting for me—got another fellow—never cared, anyhow—any one of a dozen reasons."

"You are wrong. I pawned them to keep from starving. Why did you pawn the ones I gave you?"

His arm tightened about the girl.

"Say that again, Nell," he whispered.

"You—starving!"

Nellie told him the brief story. Before she had concluded, the music ceased, and they wandered into an outer room.

"Why," she asked, "why did you go away and leave me? You couldn't have done it if you had loved me."

"Nell, listen," he replied, taking her by the shoulders. "I always loved you. I love you now. I have been through more genuine hell than even you can dream of. I've lived on one box of crackers for nine days. I was ashamed to go to you after I got canned by the grocery people, and I was broke—dead broke. Listen; it's the longest story in the world, and I'll tell it to you if there's still a chance that you care for me. But not here. Who brought you?"

"A young man."

"Where is he?"

"Getting a drink, I presume."

"Can we get away without letting him know of it?"

Nellie smiled up at him.

"Do you want to go away with me?"

"Right now," he said firmly. "We'll get into a cab and go somewhere. Nell—it's the most wonderful accident that brought us together to-night—the locket and ring—come along—I want to tell you the whole story."

Arm in arm, they scurried through a side door like criminals, and a friendly cab enveloped them. The door closed. Nellie sank back with a satisfied sigh. Otto's arm was around her, and he was talking.

In the ballroom a young man returned from the refreshment corridor, wiping his lips and looking about him cheerfully for a slender girl in a blue gown.

THE GIRL OF THE CHARNALETTE

BY
Carrington Phelps



FATIMA GIBBS, grim warder of the "Washington Square Chambers," sat in her soggy back parlor drinking pallid tea from a faded cup, and looking for all the world like a monstrous blue-and-white fly. And yet she was comparatively amiable, for a fat gentleman with a gold pince-nez had just engaged the room on the ground floor, a young married couple were moving into the basement for the winter, and there remained unoccupied now only what she regarded as a very pleasant little room up in the garret.

Fatima did not know that this particular room had achieved fame as "The Charnalette" among those grim jesters who dwelt beneath, so she sipped her tea and commuted shrilly with Sweetie, the cat, and prayed that the staring placard, "Studio To Let," pasted out in front of the house, might soon lure another lodger to swell her rentals.

Presently, as if in answer to her desire, the hall bell clanked, and Fatima set down her cup and scuttled to the door. She opened it to face a girl with a strong, slender body and big brown eyes, over a mouth that dimpled at the bow, but did its best to cry at the corners—a girl with a brave little, old little hat, and well-worn gloves, and an oil stain or two on her snug frock, a girl who was only too evidently poor—and probably wanting rooms for half their honest value from lone, hard-driven women.

Further speculation was denied Fa-

tima by the girl asking the anticipated question.

"Yes," replied Fatima. "There's one. How much would you be willin' to pay?"

The girl hesitated.

"I think," she said, "I think I should like to see it first."

Fatima stepped back, and held open the door.

"C'min. It's upstairs."

The girl followed up three flights of oil-clothed stairs, across a chilly hall, up six little bare steps, and then into a tiny catacomb with a fireplace, a gas fixture, a shriveled closet, and a dust-caked skylight.

"A beautiful room," cooed Fatima. "So bright and cheery once your furniture's in, and warmed from the hall. I often had it spoke for months ahead, and runnin' water the floor below. North light, nobody to disturb you workin', an' no children in the house. Won't have 'em!"

The girl looked at the wall paper, blistered and trailing in strips on the barren floor, looked at the moldering fireplace, and then at the choked and leering skylight.

"It's real nice," continued Fatima soothingly. "Of course you can't tell how rooms'll look till things are in 'em." She paused, rubbing her hands together, as though laving them in the dank air. "There's two comin' to look at it tomorrow, so I couldn't engage to hold it a minute. I'd be willin' to make a special rate for the winter."

"How much—what rate, I mean?"

"Only ten dollars a month, and I always gets twelve, but it's that late in the season, and——"

"I'll take it," said the girl wearily.

That night the new tenant sat disconsolately upon a steamer trunk in the midst of her tumbled possessions, like some pretty, drooping flower that had been rudely transplanted to a rock pile. There was no gas, because the meter man had not been notified, but a drooling candle cast its melancholy pallor over all. In lieu of warmth a smell of musty closeness and stale cookery drifted up from the cavernous hallways whenever the door was opened. Presently a mouse slipped out and huddled dejectedly before the empty hearth, but it was a living creature, and the girl forgot to be frightened, and then she laughed, and then, without further ado, buried her face in her arms, and began to cry softly to herself.

It happened that Dick Enderby, who lived in the front room, and wrote syndicate "specials" for a living, had herded two bushels of coal in the Charnalette. He could not know that the alert Mr. Topham, who dwelt in the rear, and worked in leaded glass, had discovered and appropriated this coal to his own selfish uses, so when he returned that night, and found an icy stove and a bare coal closet, Enderby went upstairs three steps at a time, and burst into the little room. The girl did not raise her head—it seemed better to let the world topple on her, if it cared to—so, after the first second of shock Enderby closed the door gently, and went down to talk it over with old Holden.

Thomas Holden had been puttering, and puddling, and making, and breaking in mud these twenty years or more. Nobody knew anything about him; he was the "mystery" of the quarter; nobody loved him, and he was the only being in the house who was not afraid of Fatima. For that matter, he was afraid of no one. The other lodgers called him the Polar Bear, partly because, with his benignant face and long white hair and beard, he looked the part, and partly because of his habit of

quietly dropping bill collectors over the banisters to the floor below with one huge hand. He scorned people, conventions, and money; his one, all-absorbing interest was his work, his one friend, Enderby.

When Dick Enderby entered, he found the sculptor perched before a half-finished bust, frowning horribly.

"Gee, what a face!" said Enderby, peering over the old man's shoulder. "Got any coal? No? Well, no more Charnalette for us. There's a girl in it. I walked in on her just now, and there she was, sitting in the midst of all her things, bawling."

"Hell of a place for a girl!" growled Holden.

"Poor little devil!" muttered Enderby, gazing absordedly through the window at the glittering lights of the city. "It's tough on a girl—this town."

Holden turned a sardonic eye.

"Don't rant. What do they come here for if they don't want tough treatment? Probably she's crying because she's got a stomach ache from overeating. You'll get over your sticky sentiment when you get older."

"Wonder who she is," mused Enderby.

"Name's Cartier!" snapped Holden. "Saw it on her trunk. Clear out, will you? I want to work."

He turned again to a sour contemplation of the clay.

"Fine young grouch you've got to-night," observed Enderby sweetly. "What's up? Won't your foolish mud behave?"

Holden grunted savagely. "No, it won't. The Almighty made 'em of mud, but I can't. See that mouth?" He pointed at the bust, and turned on Dick in fierce interrogation. "Well, I can't—do—it! Understand? And I can't get a model that hasn't a mouth either like a blazing sucking babe or a Mississippi catfish. You and your sentiment!" he sneered. "Why, if I told you I wanted a mouth that cried for all the sorrows of the world, and smiled through its tears, you wouldn't understand. You'd think I was sloppy. I'll

quit this chunk of mud. I've fooled with it long enough."

"Rot!" said Enderby soothingly. "Don't be an imbecile. Come in after a bit. I've got roast oysters and ale."

He went softly out the door.

Thomas Holden scowled at the door, scowled at the floor, scowled at the bust. Then he got slowly down from his stool, picked up the clay, and, carrying it into the closet, set it down with a vicious jolt on the shelf along with the other might-have-been things. Then he began pacing up and down the room, gnawing his beard and muttering. At the end of two minutes he hurled aside his apron, clapped his hat on his head, and uttering the cryptic syllables "Roses!" burst scowling out the door, and slammed it savagely behind him.

It was perhaps an hour later that, just as Holden and Enderby had begun an onslaught on the rows of succulent oysters that ranged themselves across the hearth, a voice came racketing up the stairway like the cry of a soul in torment:

"Miss Cartier-r-r-r! Oh-h, Miss Cartier-r-r-r-r-r!"

The orgy paused while the twain stared at one another over its fragments. There was a muffled jar above, then a sweet and tender little voice called "Yes?" and Dick Enderby said: "Ah-h!"

"Package for you-u-u-u!" screamed Fatima; and then light footsteps crept hesitantly down the crooked stairway, and hurried wonderingly along the hall, past the two listeners, and quickened excitedly until they became indistinguishable in the distance. Suddenly they were heard returning, fairly quivering with emotion as they pattered and bustled, one upon the very echo of the other, until, in an impudent swirl of silk, they danced past the very door, and, with the merriest, ripplingest chuckle in all the world to speed them, dashed up the crooked steps and into their own room.

"She was *laughing*!" said Enderby. "My heart, but I'm glad! What could it have been, I wonder?"

"Some damned fool sent her flowers,

maybe," growled Holden, returning to a further gorgement of the oysters.

The next morning broke wet and dour on the city, and found Thomas Holden still scowling—out the window. It was only occasionally that he scowled at the floor or at the poor, little, half-finished bust on the closet shelf that was to have been "Courage." And presently Thomas Holden scowled harder than ever, because somebody was knocking at the door, and then he snorted, and then he thundered: "*Come in,*" but did not deign to look.

"I'm very sorry——"

At the words, Thomas Holden turned, and then he gasped and scowled again. It was only a whimsically smiling vision in a short skirt and painter's blouse that stood in the doorway.

"I'm sorry, but—I wanted some flake white, and I thought there was a painter here. Excuse me."

She was backing out again, when he said sharply: "*Wait!*" She hesitated while he climbed down from his stool and rummaged in a soap box. "It's here somewhere," he rumbled, pouring out a bushel of paints, brushes, and bottles. "A painter left this junk." Then suddenly deep in his chest: "Come in, and shut that door."

The girl obeyed, and when he at last picked the coveted tube from the several square yards of litter he had made, he looked up to find her standing almost immediately behind him. He handed her the paint, glaring.

"Say," he began abruptly, "I've been hunting a model for two months. I want your mouth for this thing. Wait!" He dived into the closet, and dragged out the bust, and set it on the modeling stand. "See what I mean? Need a mouth like yours."

The girl nodded.

"Yes," she said. "I see. It's beautiful. I'll gladly pose for you."

"Sit there!" commanded Thomas Holden, and snatched up a piece of clay.

"Would you mind if I worked, too?" she asked, in pretty confusion.

"How worked?"

"I—I'm a painter, you know. I'd like

to paint you—working there, in your bare arms. It composes wonderfully.”

“I don’t care what you do,” rasped Thomas Holden, “so long as you keep still enough.”

“Then I’ll get my palette at once.”

They had been working an hour before the girl broke the silence.

“You do splendid stuff,” she said. “Have you been here long?”

“Twenty-two years,” he answered shortly. “Keep your mouth quiet, please. Don’t bite your lip.”

Another hour passed. He was drawing the curtains for more light when “Where did you study?” she asked.

He looked up.

“Nowhere. Worked up alone.”

He took up his little modeling spoon again.

“Oh! That’s fine. Much harder, too. Where’d you begin?”

He eyed her with deliberate impatience.

“Will you keep your mouth shut?” he burst out.

“Yes. If you will save me the necessity of cross-examining you in order to find out about you and your work.”

For half a minute he glared at her.

“Well?” And she leaned back and squinted at him to get the perspective better.

“I was born in Sag Harbor, Michigan.” He snapped out the words viciously. “Learned trade of wagon maker, then coach painter, then came here, loafed, drank, began modeling. That’s all. People think I’m a mystery because I won’t gabble. You’ve got more than the whole kit and boodle has in twenty years.”

He returned glumly to his clay.

“Thanks.” She smiled faintly. “You had courage and conviction.”

“Yes, I *had*—once.”

She chose to ignore the cynicism.

“That’s fine. I’ve had them only a few years, since I left high school.”

After twenty minutes: “Where—in high school?”

“New Orleans. I’d always sketched. I decided I’d paint, or perish in the attempt.”

“You’ve had a hard time?”

“Yes. I had to earn money. We were very poor—my mother and I. She did embroidery, and sold it. It wasn’t until this year that I could afford to come here.”

“Both of you?” He was watching her intently.

“Oh, no. I left mother—there.” A faintly anxious expression crept into her face.

“What do you mean—left her?”

“In New Orleans, until I can make money enough to send for her. She isn’t very well.”

“Oh, isn’t she?” Thomas Holden forgot to be gruff. “Why?”

“She’s rather old, you know.”

Thomas Holden leaned forward, frowning.

“Yes, I know. But is she—sickly?”

He seized the little modeling tool, and began touching deftly the lips of clay. The human lips before him set faintly. If only he might play upon an emotion or two behind them he was sure now of getting “Courage.”

“Yes,” continued the lips. “Doctor said that she might—that the worst might happen any moment.”

“Damnation!” cried Thomas Holden, and in an access of sudden emotion hurled mud and modeling spoon to the floor. “Will you stop talking?”

The lips set together an instant. Then they relaxed to say “Very well” dignifiedly, while Thomas Holden picked up another piece of clay, and resumed his task.

Dick Enderby, when he entered late that afternoon, stopped stock-still on the threshold, staring amazedly. For he beheld Thomas Holden, his sleeves rolled up, his eyes gleaming, working with mad enthusiasm from a model, a model with firm-poised throat and head, unfathomable eyes, and clearly the most wonderful mouth in the world; a model who sat coolly face to face with, and who painted, fearlessly painted, Thomas Holden. Enderby approached, and nudged the sculptor. Holden turned and glowered.

“Well?” said Enderby blandly. “Would you mind introducing me?”

“This is Dick Enderby, Miss Car-

tier," snapped Thomas Holden. "And she is not to talk, either. Do you understand, Enderby? Sit down and shut up, or get out."

He returned wolfishly to his work.

"Thanks," said Enderby, imperturbably ensconcing himself in a big chair, where he could ostensibly watch the girl's canvas. "I'll shut up."

It took ten seconds' observation for him to discover her to be the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. It took ten more for him to swear to himself that he would marry her. Which was a resolve of no small importance, because it was the first time in his life he had ever promised himself such a luxury.

When one is lonely in body and soul, and when brilliant hopes are grown barren, and strength of purpose battered down, it would be difficult to conceive sound more drearily disheartening than the drizzle of rain upon the roof—and at midnight. And more especially may this be true if it chance to be that melancholy season-end of winter which fears to smile, and lacks vitality to bluster.

To Wallace Cartier, as she lay sleeplessly watching the fitful flicker of the fire, and listening to the eternal trickle above, life seemed very gray indeed. Not that there was lack of cheering things. Not a bit of it. There was kind-hearted Dick Enderby, for example, who had good-naturedly stormed and, with her help, beaten the Charnal-ette into an exemplary state of papered, curtained, and hearth-warmed coziness. There was "The Masterpiece," that little canvas, picturing a white-haired old sculptor modeling with all the fire of youth, drunk with the joy of creation—that canvas finished weeks ago, and sent to the Academy. There was the order from Unger & Sneet for three advertising bits to be submitted, and probably the cover for the magazine, and, if things went luckily, a portrait or two.

And yet she was miserable; and had you asked her she could only have looked at you dumbly, and shaken her head, and smiled crookedly, because she did not know herself—entirely. It had come to her most unexpectedly, this

new desolation, one night recently as she had lain awake, listening, as now, to the rain on the roof. She had told herself there was nothing to cry about, except just "Because," and he hadn't been around in months.

Then she thought perhaps it was that Dick Enderby had asked her to marry him—but that wasn't the reason, for although she had refused him, the mere fact that he loved her had made her quite happy and important. She knew this because since his departure she had gone about with the loneliest feeling imaginable. Sometimes she asked herself if she had done quite right in refusing him. It would have been such fun to have been Somebody's, and made much of, and *thought* about—but she had done quite right. For hadn't she come to town with a great purpose absorbing her—to succeed and be sufficient unto herself? And wouldn't any deviation or weakening or self-pity be failing in that purpose?

Of course! Besides, how could any one hope to form a fine, strong character except through suffering and heroic self-sacrifice—even if it did hurt sometimes inconceivably?

Yet it seemed so empty when she walked into the little room, after a long, dragging day at the studio or around the magazine offices. Everything was glad to see her—the mug from Mory's that almost said "Boo!" with its fat little mouth, the big pewter trencher, the shiny andirons that had been her stern old grandfather's, the first sketches, the well-read books—all the belongings and trinkets that made for home smiled kindly upon her, and with a touch of pathetic understanding, as though saying: "We're sorry."

But that, after all, was not understanding so very much. They were only *things*, and one couldn't blame them for being impersonal. But things were cold comfort when one wanted living, human sympathy.

There was one way of getting happiness, though. That was to sleep. Ever since the days of spankings she had cheated unhappiness by sleep, and wonderful, golden dreams, and splendid,

princely lovers who nearly always rescued her. Usually one gained the portals of this magic land through great unhappiness, and usually tears. She had been crying now for twenty minutes before she found herself walking through a beautiful wood, toward a great white-and-green house with swans swimming in the little lake beside it. And then she chuckled softly to herself, and hurried on, because she was asleep.

The next day the sun broke clean and warm over the smudgy chimney tops, and presently the snow began to snuffle cheerfully, and the gutters to chuckle in huge glee over their muddy little streams, and the sparrows to chatter obscenely, and the square to fill with wizened old gentlemen, and talkative old ladies, and fat *bambinos*, and rioting pug dogs, so that Wallace, coming out upon it all, stopped suddenly with choking throat, filled with a great exaltation, because spring had come at last.

It was a golden day, in which everybody beamed joyfully, except Mr. Unger, of Unger & Sneet, whose fat cheeks and fishy eyes had never been constructed for smiles.

"Ve are very sorry," said Mr. Unger, "but ve have decided to curtail our expenses a little in advertising. Business iss bad, very bad. But would you lunch with me? Now, perhaps next fall——"

It was a golden day, and Wallace smiled with a little frown as she went from that porcine presence, and took a great, free breath again.

"Ah-h, Miss Cartier," purred the art editor, drawing thirstily at his cigarette. "Ah, about that cover. D'you know, I have considered it carefully—ah, very carefully—and I cannot but think that there is just the faintest predominance of—ah—mauve in the background. You see, we are a very old and—ah—conservative—ah——"

It was a golden day, a day for blithe courage, as one climbed up cold, raw stairs to a cold little room with a cold fireplace, and a cold little mug, and a cold big trencher, and all the rest of the cold Them. It was a golden day, not at all a day for disappointment or bitter heartache. It was a g-golden d-day.

Bang! went something against the door, jarring it nearly off its outraged hinges, and *bang!* again as she rose frantically, touched with a magic gesture her hair into place, and faltered: "Come!"

Slowly the door swung back, and then she caught her breath in sheer, palpitating panic, for there, smiling quietly before her astonished eyes, stood Dick Enderby.

"Oh-h!" she cried, as he came and took her hand. "Oh, Dick!"

"Didn't expect me, did you? Jove, I'm glad to look at you again! How goes the picture work?"

She pointed at several unfinished bits on the mantel.

"Considering everything, Dick, pretty well."

He noted the mistiness that might have been tears in her eyes, and the gray shadows round them that bespoke merciless work. But he smiled.

"I'm glad of that," he said. "Will you marry me?"

She flashed at him in raillery, but his quiet earnestness disarmed her. There was a tiny pause, and then: "I can't, Dick," she answered quietly. "It wouldn't be fair to my resolves, to my work, to myself."

"You don't care for me—is that it?"

"No-o."

"Then you *do*?"

"I don't quite know, Dick. Sometimes I want to give up."

"To me?"

"Yes," defiantly, "to you. But I always conquer it, because it is so abominably selfish. Yes, it is. I'd hate myself for it. You know I mustn't fail, mustn't even think of anything but my work."

"Yes," said Dick gravely. "I know, but I also know that you mustn't make a god of this resolve. Why not accept me, and then let me work out our salvation afterward? It wouldn't affect your work, and there are several thousand ways in which I could help you. Oh, my dear," he cried out impetuously, "this isn't the life for you. It might suit some, but never a woman like you. Don't you realize, don't you know, you

weren't meant for it? Are you quite sure you will make good? Sure in your responsibility?"

A little flush of pleasure had crept into her cheeks, but she bit her lip, and regarded him with troubled eyes.

"Quite sure, Dick. You know the 'Masterpiece' didn't do anything at the Academy, but somebody saw it, and liked it, and bought it for two hundred."

"That convinces you of success, then?"

"No. Money isn't the main point, though mother does depend on me for what little I can send now and then. The main point is my work. Oh, I dare say you are right, Dick, from your point of view, but I'm going on with it. You mustn't be selfish, you mustn't try to tempt me from what is to be my life. It would be cheating to turn my back on my work now."

He released her hand, and his face set darkly.

"I'm going to tell you something," he said quietly, "and it's going to grill you a little, because you need it. You say it would be cheating even partially to neglect your work for anything else. Do you realize you've been cheating yourself ever since you decided to have nothing in your life but your work? You say art is everything, your all. What about your life? Why were you born, even? To follow art—an artificial creation—or to be a woman, to *live*? What are your eyes and mind and heart for? What produced them? Art or life? And who are you to judge what life is? Who knows most, you or Almighty God?" He turned abruptly to the door. "I want you to *think*, that's all."

She shook her head, following him with sorrowful eyes.

"I have thought, Dick. I can't change."

Dick smiled.

"Any one can change."

He held out his hand. "Good-by for now," and then he went out and down to Thomas Holden's.

Dick found the sculptor pacing the floor, for all the world like some caged old lion, very gruff, very abstracted, and

scowling worse than ever. It was after the somewhat halting preliminaries that Holden asked abruptly:

"How's that girl upstairs?"

Dick grinned. There was no secret about his suit.

"She's just refused to marry me," he said. "Her career and her art must come first, and——"

"Don't tell *me* what she says," growled Thomas Holden. "I know what they all say. Drool about their art, and their careers, and their souls, when all they need is hard work, and plenty of it. Well? What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing. Except stick. She won't listen to reason."

"No. None of them do." And Thomas Holden resumed his restless pacing.

At intervals he glanced at an alarm clock on the mantel. Presently he came before Dick and stood there, legs braced apart, teetering from heel to toe.

"It's time," he announced enigmatically. "It's time now to speak. Go upstairs, and tell that girl to come down here at once. Tell her I've something to say to her."

Marveling, Dick obeyed. When they returned, a few minutes later, they found Thomas Holden leaning against the mantel, his great, white head sunk in his hands, in what for an instant seemed to them an attitude of dejection. He roused instantly, though, and pointed to a chair.

"Sit down!" he said shortly. "Dick tells me you won't marry him. You've an idea your art's more important. Never mind," as Wallace opened her lips to speak. "I know all about it. I haven't seen 'em come and go twenty years for nothing, and I want to tell you you are making a stupid, obstinate blunder. You are going to marry Dick, and be happy."

"I am not," said Wallace quietly. "And if Dick or you think your gratuitous and unsolicited advice is——"

"Never mind that!" Thomas Holden slapped the mantel, and wheeled on her. "I'm your friend, my girl, and all your female spite won't alter that fact. Dick

has nothing to do with my speaking. All I ask of you is to listen, and try to look at things fairly and squarely, like a man."

He stuck his hands in his coat pockets, and began slowly pacing up and down the room.

"Dick here's a good boy," he went on. "I've watched him pretty carefully. He thinks the sun rises and sets in you, and, besides, he's got a steady income. You like him, too; and, on the other hand, you can't make money. You think your career is life. Well, it isn't. Understand? You are willing to throw up everything for it; and you don't even know if you've got talent, except what your fool friends tell you, who don't know talent from axle grease."

"I sold a picture for two hundred dollars," she interjected.

Thomas Holden smiled.

"Yes. You did. And I'll speak of that in a minute."

He leaned with his back against the mantel, peering at her from under his bushy eyebrows.

"You see," he continued, "I've some right to talk to you, because I went through the same sort of thing myself. I went in for art and a career, and I put them before every other thing, living or dead. D'you understand? And I did it in order that I might follow what I fatuously thought was my destiny. I made it my destiny, though, just as I could have made the other my destiny if I'd not been a fool. Well, I followed my destiny—my career, and now look at it!"

He swept an inclusive arm toward the casts, the half-finished clays, the shabby plunder of the walls and corners.

"Magnificent, isn't it? It means the ability to earn enough to live. No more, though—no name, no career, no wife, no child, no self-respect, nothing. But I've had art. Don't forget *that*. I've had art, and the aesthetics, and the finer feelings, and yet I'm starving for real life! D'you understand?"

Wallace Cartier rose from her chair. "This cannot possibly interest me," she began coldly.

"Can't it?" Thomas Holden leaned forward, and laughed a little, bitter laugh. "I'll show you if it can't!" And, reaching up, he drew from a shelf a canvas, and set it rudely on the mantel.

It was the "Masterpiece," dusty, unkempt, and forlorn.

"Can that interest you?" He pointed a grim finger at the painting. "Look at it. See its drawing, its composition! Bad, all bad. And that's the sort of thing for which you'd barter away your life! That's the sort of thing you want, instead of strong arms to love you, and warm little hands, and tender little voices. For shame!"

For an instant she forgot her self-possession, and flashed out futilely:

"Shame, indeed! *You* did it!"

"Yes, I did it. And that's why I see so clearly the mistake you want to make."

She threw back her head coolly.

"I appreciate your interest, Mr. Holden, very much, but I don't understand it—nor what my picture is doing here."

"It's here because it belongs here."

"How?"

"You thought some Westerner bought it. That's what they were told to say. Well, I bought it, and a precious two hundred worth it is."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I bought it for the same reason I'm talking to you now. To help you. That's all."

He picked up the picture, and set it down again mechanically. Wallace searched his face stupidly.

"I don't understand," she said.

Thomas Holden looked at her, and then at Dick, and then his eyes came back again to hers. They saw that he was breathing curiously, as though his throat were parched.

"I'm your father!"

He said the words very softly, and then leaned toward her, staring. For an instant Wallace looked at him wonderingly.

"Are you mad?" she asked.

"No. I am John Cartier."

She tried to smile a little.

"You said you were—a—a wagon maker."

"I lied, as I changed my name, as I've lied to them all for twenty years. I knew you the moment you came into my studio that morning. You were Alice—your mother, of twenty years ago. And then you said she was ill, and it was like ten thousand devils let loose again inside of me. I thought it was better that she thought I was dead, but fate brought you here to change all that."

He ceased speaking because of what he saw in her eyes. Loathing! She stood straight and still, her hands at her sides, her face chalk white.

"At last," said her lips silently. "At last."

She took a great breath, and John Cartier moaned deep in his throat, but could not take his eyes from hers.

She turned to Enderby.

"Do you know who this is?" And then her gaze came back to the old man. "This is the man who deserted my mother; who left her to struggle and to starve; and afterward, when her child was born, to die, almost, and then to struggle and to starve again. This is the man who for twenty years and more has stayed in hiding, from a woman. I knew I'd meet him some day, this canting hypocrite—this—my *father!* My *coward!*" She took a pace toward him, and John's eyes and body cringed before her like those of a beaten hound. "Self, *self* is all you've thought of!" And again she whispered: "Coward!"

He raised his head, and looked at her, and never had they heard his voice so broken:

"You're quite right. It *has* been self. And for all that you can say or think of me I can say and think many times worse. I wanted my career because I thought the other, quieter life froze out all romance, and color, and wonder; and so, for the sake of all these things, I ran away. Well—" He walked slowly over to the modeling stand, and, picking up a piece of clay, began to mold it mechanically. "Well, instead, I lost all of these things, and then I found out that I had lost all the things I had run away from. And then I realized how precious they were—after it was too

late. But I'd lose them a thousand times over if only I might keep you from losing them, too; if I could warn you in time, maybe." He turned to her wistfully. "Do you understand?"

She averted her face in silence.

He set the clay on the stand, and patted it slowly. He seemed to have grown suddenly into old age, feeble and listless, into an old age that had hitherto seemed but a sort of mask to hide a youth's impulsive strength and arrogance.

"I am sorry you despise me," he said. "But I don't blame you for it. I understand it so well. I have despised myself so long. I thought it was too late even to try to make reparation, until you came—and I have tried ever since, and shall as long as I live. I was glad when you came. I acted at once—even before I knew you, when I sent you roses. I have been so afraid to tell you. I have dreaded it so much—even the loss of your kindness—for I knew I would never have your love. That's why I didn't tell you until—the eleventh hour. And now"—he glanced at the clock with a touch of the old vigor—"now *she* will soon be here."

The girl looked up, startled.

"Mummsy?" she cried.

John Cartier smiled faintly.

"I used to call her that, too. Yes—mummsy."

"Does *she* know?"

He nodded. There was a brief silence between them, so that her whisper fell loudly on the quiet air:

"She—she has—forgiven?"

Again he nodded.

"Yes, she has forgiven. Could you—ever?"

And then, as the warmth of an unborn, unguessed something began slowly to glow far back in her eyes, there came three gentle taps at the door. They turned as one, staring, until a muffled, timid voice said: "Does John Cartier live here?" and the girl sobbed "Mummsy!" and choked.

John Cartier, his face shining, stepped to the door and opened it.

A little silver woman was standing patiently on the threshold.



KATHLEEN, OF COURSE

by William Slavens McNutt

MEN called Dan Morrissey a prodigy. An Irishman of the most humble parentage, he was a picturesque type of that class of men who have flamed high out of the sodden smolder of poverty, in the last two decades in this country, and startled the world with their elemental daring and originality, but he was not a prodigy.

He was a thoroughly natural flower of the life and experience of his ancestors. The sun of opportunity had beamed on him, and he had bloomed full and done greatly, in the expansion of its warmth, the things that his forefathers had accomplished in a small way in the lifelong shadow of constant adversity.

He wrought wonders with millions, as they had learned to make pennies do the impossible in the bitter battle for existence.

His cool nerve in a financial crisis was the nerve of men who had dared to laugh and love with the shadow of imminent starvation always over them.

His daring in great undertakings was a heritage from the simple-minded Irish peasant, whose immigration to America was as greatly fraught with the terror of the unknown as Columbus' first voyage.

Laborer on the railroad, ballast-gang foreman, contractor, speculator, he had smashed his way, exultant, from a bunk in a construction-camp shack to a place in Wall Street.

Dan Morrissey, laborer, was a fiery,

denunciatory, fist-brandishing champion of all—isms; Daniel Morrissey, Wall Street broker and magnate, was much given to viewing with alarm such things as are usually so viewed, and spoke much in ponderous condemnation of certain distressing tendencies among "The Peepul."

He had the face of an actor, the body of a lumberjack, the whimsical, ruthless, cunning brain of a fox that plans thefts as much for the sake of simply outwitting an adversary as for the actual gain, and the wayward, snobbish, supersensitive heart of an overimaginative, spoiled child.

His wife had died soon after the big successes had begun to come, and the big Irishman's affections had centered in his only child, young Dan; a tall, blue-eyed, black-haired edition of his father, plus the polish of a college education and minus the rugged dominance of the man who had fought his own way out of the murk of obscurity.

Old Dan's greatest ambition was to see that young Dan had none of the training or experience that had gone to make him the power he was.

A year out of Harvard, with nothing to do but spend his own time and his father's money, there were really only two possible courses open to as energetic and healthy an animal as young Dan, namely, to fall into the wildest dissipation or fall in love.

Being normal and more or less decent, he did the latter, and rushed into his father's office one spring morning,

chucked his coat into one corner and his hat into another, rolled his sleeves to his shoulder, spat on his hands, rumbled his hair, and fiercely announced his readiness to begin work, as office boy, general manager, in any position that happened to be vacant.

Inasmuch as all mention heretofore on his father's part of the advisability of young Dan putting aside at least a few minutes of each day, for the purpose of acquiring a smiling acquaintance with a few of the simple rudiments of the business, had always evoked the information that he "couldn't possibly spare the time," the old gentleman naturally sought the moving why of the fever of industry that had so suddenly taken possession of his offspring.

"It's like this, dad," said the young fellow, as he upended a waste-paper basket and kicked it under him, with boyish disregard for such conventional nuisances as chairs. "You see, she wants me to prove that I'm capable of making my own way. She's not content to have her husband be merely a rich man's son. She said that—Why! What's the matter, dad? Aren't you well?"

A far wiser man might well have put the same question. A medical genius would have stood before old Dan confounded, dazedly muttering: "Liver trouble! Quick consumption! Apoplexy! Appendicitis! Epileptic fits and stomach ache!" as unmistakable symptoms of each appeared in his empurpled, contorted face.

Young Dan finally managed to pick out of the roaring Niagara of verbal vitriol that issued from his father's lips a sufficient number of more or less coherent sentences, to diagnose the basic cause of the old gentleman's trouble as a vast ignorance as to the identity of "she," compounded with a mighty longing for immediate, or even quicker, enlightenment.

"Why, it's Kathleen, dad," said young Dan.

He said it with the air of one who had condensed the "Encyclopedia Britannica" into one, all-illuminant word,

that also explained the mysteries of birth, death, eternity, and a few other heretofore unsolved puzzles.

His father sat back in his chair, hopelessly calm.

The energy expended should at the very least have elicited a Wynne Gwendolyn Gladys Vandervere, together with a two-column pedigree, and all that had come forth was "Kathleen."

"Kathleen!" ruminated old Dan. "Kathleen! Interesting! Remarkably so! Would it be possible for you to collect yourself sufficiently to make a definite statement as to whether she lives in New York or Tangiers?"

"Why, of course she lives in New York," said young Dan.

"Of course she does," agreed his father. "Stupid of me not to know that all Kathleens live in New York! I suppose it's very impertinent of me to be curious as to what particular Kathleen I am to be permitted to be the father-in-law of, but——"

"Why, Kathleen Connors, dad, of course!"

"Kathleen Connors?" his father questioned blankly. "Kathleen Con——What?"

The seismographs in the observations in surrounding States are said to have reported slight tremors that morning.

"That red-headed stenographer I fired last month for being late?"

"Gee, dad!" said young Dan, with an injured air. "That was a bad break on your part. You almost queered me with her. I had an awful job trying to make her see that she had no right to throw me down just because you were such a bull-headed old ram, but she says if you'll apologize she'll do the right thing and call it square."

"You don't tell me!" said the old man, elaborately grateful. "And I've no doubt if we both coaxed her real nice, we could induce the young lady to become one of the family, and spend as much of my dirty money as she could lay her hands on."

"That's what I wanted her to do, dad, but she won't."

"You bet she won't!"

Old Dan seemed quite positive of

this. He snatched a check book from a pigeonhole in his desk, and scribbled in it.

"Here!" he said shortly, tearing out the blank he had filled and handing it to his son.

"Get out! Go to Europe! Go any place you like! Only——"

He got up, and laid his hand on young Dan's shoulder.

"Give me your word that you'll put an end to this piece of foolishness."

Old Dan's voice was almost tender as he continued:

"I've nothing against the girl, as a girl, my boy. She may be all you think she is, and if you've got a liking for her it may give you a twist for a few weeks to let her go, but you can do it, and you've got to do it! She's not for you, Dan. You've got to marry in your own class."

Young Dan stood silent for a bit, his head bowed, fingering the bit of paper his father had given him. Deliberately he stripped it in half, quartered it, and, twisting the pieces together, tossed them aside as he raised his head and looked at his father.

His lips were drawn into a straight line, and his jaws set hard, but there was a little twinkle in his eye as he said mildly:

"I'm going to, dad. Her father's dead now, but he used to be a bricklayer. You used to shovel rocks on the railroad. I guess that's a little beneath bricklaying, but—— I don't think she'll be snobbish about it."

"Young man!"

There was neither fatherly tenderness nor fatherly anger in old Dan's voice now.

"I worked my way up from shoveling rocks on the railroad to where I am now. That was my job, and I did it. Your job is to keep going what I started, and it's no part of that job for you to marry a woman of the class that I've slaved like a dog to get out of."

The twinkle was all gone from young Dan's eyes.

"I see," he said. "If you had gotten out of that class before you met mother, you wouldn't have——"

"That's enough!"

The warning note was cold and hard, but the old man's voice shook a little as he went on:

"Your mother was one of the best women that ever——"

"You bet she was!"

Young Dan leaned over his father, his jaw thrust out like a threatening fist.

"And Kathleen's another! You'd have whipped your own father if he'd ever said the girl you loved wasn't good enough for you, and I'll do the same. I'm of age! I'm going to marry Kathleen Connors! What are you going to do about it?"

Old Dan sat down at his desk, and began arranging his papers, dangerously calm.

"You are of age," he said, with apparent indifference, as he opened a letter and looked it over. "Do as you like, only kindly keep in mind the fact that I'll pay none of your bills from now on, until such time as you give me your word to have done with this girl. You can do as you please with yourself, and I can do as I please with my money. I don't please to have either the young lady in question or her husband spend any of it. That's all."

After a few minutes' intense absorption in his mail, he glanced up to see young Dan still standing by his side.

"My time is more or less valuable," he said shortly. "If you've anything more to say——"

Young Dan picked up his coat, and walked slowly to the door. At the threshold, he paused.

"Gee, dad!" he said huskily. "You needn't have rubbed it in quite so strong about——about the money. I—I don't want your money. Honest, I don't, dad. I can go to work, and——"

"Yes?" His father crossed his legs, and regarded him impersonally over the tip of his cigar as he held a match to it. "Doing what?"

"Why," said young Dan. "I'll——I'll——"

His brows contracted, and he scratched his head in bewilderment.

"I don't know," he finished lamely.

"There is not one thing," said old Dan slowly, watching the smoke from his cigar curl upward, "not one thing that men pay money for that you can do. Not one!"

The boy flushed.

"You have managed to make a rather useless bum out of me, haven't you? You and your money!"

Old Dan grinned.

"You might be able to swing a pick and shovel," he suggested satirically.

"A pick and shovel!" the young fellow repeated thoughtfully. "A pick and——"

He squared his shoulders, and took a long breath.

"In other words, I'm only fit to begin at twenty-five where you began at fourteen."

He laid his hand on the doorknob.

"It's about time you stopped paying my bills. I'm eleven years behind you now, but if I can't make something better of myself than you and your money have—— Good-by!"

Old Dan half raised from his chair as the door slammed, but changed his mind and sat back with a derisive grunt.

"He'll come back," he said to himself. "Let him go! He'll show up at the feed box at meal time."

Kathleen Connors was twenty-two and red-headed. She had been motherless from the second hour of her earthly career. That she held her head proudly and looked at the world unafraid and unashamed, after the six years' struggle for existence, since her father had made a misstep while working on a scaffold eight stories in the air, may have had nothing to do with the color of her hair, but the color of her hair may have had something to do with the fact that she held her head proudly and looked at the world unafraid and unashamed after the six—— Enough!

The eyes that looked at the world unafraid and unashamed—it will soon be a habit—were large, and light gray, shot through with flecks of blue. They were beautiful eyes, bewildering in their frank directness of gaze; a wee

bit of sadness in their expression spoke the loneliness and hunger of the clean, plucky soul that looked out of them.

She had a trim, straight figure, almost military in its erect, snappy bearing; a nose that started out to be severely Roman, and ended in the most adorable, cuddly, warm-hearted, wee bit of a snubby tilt imaginable; mouth that tried very hard to be severe, and only succeeded in being very kissable; and a brave, firm, well-rounded chin. She was an altogether desirable and worth-while sort of a person, that a better and wiser man than young Dan might well have been proud to have the opportunity of doing something foolish for.

Young Dan, rumped of hair, and melodramatically miserable, blundered into the fourth floor back on West Forty-ninth Street that was Kathleen's parlor, living room, bedroom, dining room, and kitchen, and sank into a chair, his face in his hands, a perfect "ten-twenty-and-thirty" conception of a ruined man.

Kathleen had seen much misery and ruin that didn't end with the drop of the curtain on the final act. She had rubbed elbows with sorrow and hardship all her life; bitter disappointment had been a close companion, and grief, however expressed, had lost its power to startle.

She sat down in a chair opposite Dan, folded her arms, and regarded the limp huddle of dejection calmly.

"Well," she said, "what's up?"

"It's dad," said Dan mournfully.

"What about him?"

"We had a row. He told me either to give you up or get out, and I got out. He's disinherited me."

Kathleen went to the door, and opened it.

"If you feel as bad as all that about losing money that didn't belong to you, anyway," she said, "run along back to papa, and tell him from me that he's welcome to you. I've got troubles of my own. It's rent day to-morrow, and I haven't been able to find a place since 'dad' disinherited me from my sixteen dollars per."

"Kathleen!" said Dan. He said it just like he looked. "Why, Kathleen!"

"What?" She said it just like *she* looked, too.

"Why," said Dan, "what—what do you mean?"

"Exactly what I said." She was very calmly explicit. "You had to choose between me and your dad's money, and if you feel as bad over the choice as you seem to—no, thank you!"

There was a little overemphasis in the "No, thank you"; a tremulous, lonely quiver in the voice that tried so hard to be matter of fact, that brought all the innate man stuff in young Dan to the surface, and he folded the little figure, unresisting, in his arms.

"Why, honey," he murmured to the top of the dear head that hid itself on his shoulder, "I wasn't feeling bad about that, dear. It's because I haven't got the money to give you things and — Dad made it pretty plain, when I spoke of going to work myself, that about all I could do was to swing a pick and shovel."

"Well?"

The question came faint and muffled from somewhere in the vicinity of Dan's vest pocket.

"You can, can't you?"

"Can?"

"Swing a pick and shovel."

Dan put a big hand under the chin that burrowed in his coat, and tilted a very flushed, very tear-stained face upward. What he saw in the swimming gray eyes seemed to startle him, for he gave an exclamation, and his face whitened in reverent wonder at the things he read there.

"Why, Kathleen!" he said, in an awed voice. "You'd do it, wouldn't you? Even that way! Why—why, you great, big woman, you!"

"Oh, Danny! Danny!" she sobbed, suddenly altogether soft and clinging. "It isn't so awful, even that way, if we're only together, Danny, boy! It isn't being hard up that's so awful bad; it's being hard up all alone that hurts so, Danny. Coming back to your room at night, after an awful hard day to— to just nothing but a bed and a wash-

stand and a gas jet. It'll maybe be an awful pull together, Danny, but that bed and washstand and gas jet—that'll be *home*, then, Danny. We'll have something when the day's over and the night comes; we'll have each other. And maybe, Danny, maybe"—she smiled through her tears and hid her face again—"we'll think just a whole lot more of each other, 'cause we won't have anything else to think of."

Then Dan said—well, he didn't really say much of anything, but he said it a great many times, and she did the same, and then, after she'd disengaged herself from Dan's grasp, and laughed some more, and cried at the same time, and then dried her eyes, and carefully powdered the tip of her nose, she sat down and folded her arms in the capable way she had, and said:

"Now, then, just how much have you got?"

"Not very much," said Dan ruefully. "Only about four hundred and fifty dollars."

"Only!" she echoed. "Only! Why, I never saw four hundred and fifty dollars on my side of the grated window in my life! Then, there's your ring; how much did that cost you?"

"Eight hundred and forty."

"And your scarfpin?"

"Two hundred."

"And then there's your diamond-studded watch."

She figured busily on the back of an envelope.

"We ought to be able to get together between a thousand and twelve hundred dollars altogether. You give me all your jewelry, and I'll see what I can do with it in the morning. Go down to the station to-night, and buy two tickets as far West as any of the railroads run. That's the place to go. It's new out there, and there's a better chance. Then we'll go down to the city hall together to-morrow morning and get the—get the—"

"Get the—" prompted Dan.

"Get the— Oh, Danny!"

Her arms went round his neck in a swift, tight, wholesome hug.

"I've just never had anything to be

sure 'nough glad about before, and I'm just so awful happy all over now! I'm so happy, it hurts."

Three years later, old Dan Morrissey sat huddled in the big swivel chair in his private office, absorbed in the meaningless marks that he absently traced with his pencil on the blotting tab of his desk.

What old Dan saw on that tab was the headline that he knew would be in the next morning's paper; a headline that contained his name in bold type; a headline that told of his utter financial ruin; a headline that would shriek to the whole world the news that big Dan Morrissey was smashed at last.

The clock in old Trinity tolled midnight. The flint-eyed, gray-haired man of law, that had sat with old Dan since early in the afternoon, pointing out the utter hopelessness of any attempt at salvage from the wreck of the gigantic fortune in a cold and monotonous voice that seemed to emanate from some hidden machine, so utterly devoid it was of any note of sympathy or interest, rose and took up his coat and hat.

Old Dan glanced up as the other rose.

"So that's all, eh?"

"Exactly," the monotonous voice agreed.

"There's no possible chance? Nothing to be done? This is the—the end?"

"Precisely."

Old Dan leaned back in his chair, his hands hanging limp at his sides.

"Macklyn," he said wearily, "that's the end of the business, but what about me? What does a man in my position do? What should he do?"

The lawyer tapped the brim of his hat with a judicial forefinger.

"One has the choice of a number of evils," said he slowly. "Have you any particular one in mind?"

Old Dan opened his eyes, and looked hard at the gray-haired man for a moment.

"Yes," he said, in a hard, strained voice; "yes, I have."

He opened a drawer in his desk, and the light from the shaded electric glinted, for an instant, on blued steel.

"That's my idea," he said, as he snapped the drawer shut again. "Can you suggest anything better?"

The lawyer stepped up to Dan, and hesitatingly laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Mr. Morrissey," he said, suddenly human, "when a man has climbed as high as you and falls, the momentum is so great that he can stay himself on no rung of the ladder on which he rose. He must fall deep as he has climbed high. I admire courage—the courage to live fully—and no less the courage to——"

His hand found Dan's, and wrung it hard.

"What the world will say can be of no consequence to you, sir; but permit me to say now that I think very highly of your idea, and——"

He moved to the door, and opened it.

"I have nothing better to suggest. Good evening, sir, and—— Good-by!"

Old Dan sat long, motionless, thinking, and his thoughts were altogether morbid and hopeless. The old, exultant fighting spirit that had always burned hottest under the fiercest pressure, the sublime reliance on *himself*, was gone. He had come to rely, not on himself, supreme and independent, but on the power of the money that his rampant energy and daring nerve had gathered; and, this gone, he suddenly faced a strange world, strangely helpless. The real fighting man in him had atrophied. He had been for years simply the director of a Thing that the man in him had created, and now, the Thing gone, he found the old Dan Morrissey, creator, dead, and Dan Morrissey, director, helpless.

His watch showed past two when he finally roused himself from his bitter reverie, and took from a pigeonhole in his desk a letter, written in pencil, on cheap-lined paper,

The ill-spelled scrawl, that he had already read a dozen times, ran as follows:

Prince Rupert B. C.
the eleventh of may.

dear sir,
dan.

I ant never wrot you dan but you no me alrite caus i cum nerer liking you than eny

man did. im con Hogan and if i had hold ov you now i bet i cud lik you to. yur boy hes a timkeeper for me at camp sevenene and his wuman she keeps the komisaury thair for me and she and him is both fine fokes and a dam site better than you caus you ar a fule, and i wud tel you to yure face you waz if i was whair you ar. yure boy he told me al about hou you akted when he got merid after i told him hou you and me ust to be tugether. he ant mad but he wont rite caus he dont think you want him to. they got a baby gerl wun yere old. get sum sens and rite to him. I got thre kontraks on the nu rode thair ar bilding here. you got rich as hel dident you. no more nou from

CON HOGAN.

Old Dan folded the letter, and put it in his inner coat pocket.

"A baby girl!" he mused. "A baby girl! I'd like to— Bah!"

He resolutely took from the drawer the shining automatic, and with closed eyes jammed the muzzle against his left breast. It rustled a bit of paper in his inner coat pocket. Old Dan slowly dropped the gun to his side, and opened his eyes. Still very slowly, he drew out the ill-scrawled letter.

"A little baby girl!" he repeated. "A little baby girl!"

He slipped the gun into his pocket, threw on his coat and hat, rang the phone briskly, and called for a certain number.

"Hello!" he said. "How soon can I get a train West? Twenty-eight minutes?"

He hung up the receiver, and started hastily for the door.

"I can make it," he muttered. "I'm going to have one good look at that kid first, and damn the difference!"

The little town of Prince Rupert, huddled at the foot of the mountains on the northern British Columbia coast, was aflame with vivid life the night old Dan landed there. The narrow plank roadways were choked with a motley, partly drunken, altogether happy-go-lucky crowd of Siwash, prospectors, fishermen, and high-booted, blue-shirted, roistering men of all nationalities from the railroad gang.

Groups of men reeled in and out of the different blind pigs and gambling houses that lined the main street, roar-

ing out rough snatches of song and boisterous jokes. Some were "broke," but none seemed unhappy. What did it matter? There was work a-plenty, and good wages; free air that swept clean off the arctic snows, and set the blood singing with the pure joy of just being alive; grub for all, work for all, health for all, and glorious sprees now and then in the town. Every man held his head high, serenely sure that he was just as good as anybody else, and perhaps a little better. Everywhere was the sense of freedom; freedom from financial worry; freedom from conventionalities of any kind.

Neither the scene nor the spirit was new to old Dan. Railroad construction gangs in virgin countries had been his home in his young days, but he walked through the reckless, free-swinging crowd now, a stranger to them and to the spirit that was in them. In all the colorful throng that eddied through the streets of the little shack town, his shoulders alone drooped wearily.

The click of poker chips caught his ear as he passed a one-story building with the legend "Cigars and Tobacco" inscribed on the big, front window, and he wandered aimlessly into a long, bare room, dim with tobacco smoke. There were a half dozen games running full-handed, and at one of the poker tables he saw a profile that was familiar. A moment later, Con Hogan was doing a hilarious war dance about him, and pounding him soulfully on the back.

"Why, ye dog-gone ole—"

Con ripped out an utterly horrible name, prefaced with adjectives to match, all indicative of the warmth of his welcome.

"How's yer gizzard? Ah, sure, Dan, ye're fit for a mon to look at! Ye are thot! Wait till I cash in the little thot's left of whut wuz a dommed healthy bit of a bank roll a few hours back, and we'll hov a drink."

He counted his stack of chips, and shoved them across the table to the dealer.

"Wan hundred an' twinty-five, Billy," he said. "I lose six hundred and sivinty-five. Spind it foolishly,

son, and quick, while ye hov it; for the first bit o' luck that hits me, I'll check-rack ye!"

He grabbed Dan by the arm.

"Come on, old-timer!" he said. "Sure we'll drink domination to the years that's put the flour in our hair."

And they passed out together.

Con set his glass down on the rough pine-board bar, that he and Dan leaned against, and eyed his companion keenly.

"Whatever's on yer mind, bucko?" he said, with rough sympathy. "Sure, man, if ye didn't walk and talk an' cough hard an' human, whin ye shot yerself in the gullet with thot slug o' colored gasoline they give us fer whiskey, I'd swear 'twas the ghost o' ye standin' beside o' me. Boost yerself outside another drink. 'Twill do ye no good; but sure, drink it for pastime. Are ye thinkin' the lad will not be happy o' seein' ye? Sure, Dan, he holds no hard feelin's."

"Con," said old Dan heavily, "I'm all in. I'm done for."

"Ye've a mortal sickness on ye, Dan?" said Con slowly.

"No, Con, not that. You don't know, of course. I've lost everything, Con."

Con still seemed puzzled.

"Ye mane—" he questioned, with raised brows.

"I mean I've lost everything," old Dan repeated, in a heartsick voice. "It's all gone! Every cent! I—I'm broke, Con. I— What's the matter?"

Hogan was doubled up over the bar, laughing uproariously. He straightened up, and punched old Dan weakly in the ribs.

"Oh! Haw! Haw! Haw! Ho! Ho!" he roared, wiping his streaming eyes with his coat sleeve. "They got to ye fer the bank roll, hey? The whole wad? Ow, howly mother!"

He rocked off into another roaring convulsion of mirth.

"Mon! Mon!" he gasped. "Sure, I thought the way ye talked somethin' awful had happened to ye! Sure it does make a man fair wild to go and git tricked out o' his pile, don't it? I

mind I went broke on a contrac' on the P. & L. W. three year back, and I niver drew sober breath fer six weeks, thot sore I was, thinkin' on them as had trimmed me, laughin' at me fer the fule I was. Haw! Haw! Haw! Sure, Dan, I thought ye was too big fer to iver git caught. The whole pile? Oh! Ho! Ho! Thot's a good one! Sure, hov another drink!"

"You don't understand, Con," old Dan went on monotonously. "You don't understand. I'm ruined, Con. I can't— Everything's gone. I'm— ruined!"

The mirth lines went out of Con's face as though they had been wiped away with an invisible sponge, and a look of deep concern took its place. He thrust his face close up to Dan's, and stared hard into his haggard, deep-sunk eyes.

"Ye're right! Ye *are* ruined!" he said slowly. His big voice was vibrant with pity. "They got yer nerve along with yer bank roll, didn't they?"

He nodded slowly.

"I reckon ye're right, Dan. Ye *hov* lost everything. The eyes of ye, mon! They're rotten like old wood. Why— why, my God! Ye ain't even mad!"

He repeated to himself: "Ye ain't even mad!"

As he repeated the words slowly, the birth of an idea glinted in his blue eyes, and they narrowed with calculation, as they studied old Dan's bent head and drooping figure. When he spoke again, his voice was hard and nasty with contempt.

"So they broke ye, hey?" he sneered. "Swiped yer roll and broke yer nerve. Broke big Dan Morrissey, the bucko Irishman thot could lick annything two-legged in the old days. Hell!"

He spat disgustedly.

"Ye niver hod anny nerve. The first time in yer life ye git a proper lickin' handed to ye ye crawl and whine like a mangy cur pup with the belly ache. Ye—"

"Look here, Con; that's enough of that."

An ugly red was spreading over Dan's face. There was a hint of trucu-

lency in the hang of the drooping shoulders.

"You don't know what I'm up against. It—it's different with me. You see, I——"

"I know it's different, ye low-down, white-livered, yellor-blooded, four-flushin' hulk of shame to yer good old Irish mother! Ye hod more money fer years than anny o' the bunch that started with ye iver rid about, an' whin ye lose it ye come snivelin' to me thot niver did hov annything. Ye're a dirthy quitter!"

Con shoved his ugly, leering face close to the other, and spat his words venomously.

"Ye're a coward! I'm ashamed to own I iver knew ye. Ye're a yellor dog thot anny drunken bum could lick, an' ye'd only yelp an' run; ye're an ornery, cringin'——"

Smack!

Dan's open palm caught the sneering face a blow that brought the blood and sent Con staggering backward.

Dan's face was a pulsing red, and the muscles in Dan's big jaw showed in writhing knots.

His coat and vest were on the sawdust-covered floor, and his big fists were poised in front of him.

He crouched, every muscle in his body alive and tense, and his eyes were the hard gray slits that strong men had feared, from the bunk house to Wall Street, and his voice was a low, guttural rumble, deadly with threat and command, and it came from his lips in the rich brogue of his boyhood.

"Shuck that coat, Con Hogan! Shuck that coat, and put up yer fists! Put up yer fists, and fight fer yer life, 'cause I'm goin' to come dom near killin' ye. Put 'em up, ye dog! An' take the dirty, bloody lickin' ye almighty well know I can give ye!"

Con Hogan's face wore what might be called a composite expression, as he slowly took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. I would analyze the composition as equal parts of abstract joy and very personal grief. The very positive expression on old Dan's face explained his abstract joy, joy in the

success of the medicine he had administered, and the condition of his own face, ten minutes later, when some dozen or more men had succeeded in prying old Dan loose from him, explained the element of personal grief.

Con held out his hand, when he managed to rise from the floor.

"Dan," he said feebly, "put her there, mon! We're brothers. I ain't lost *everything*, but there's a couple o' pounds o' skin an' some few teeth missin', to say nothin' o' me beauty. Sure, I'm worse ruint than ye iver thought o' bein'. Shake!"

They shook.

"Come on, Con," said Dan, taking him by the arm. "We'll go get this face o' yours patched up, an' then we'll come back an'—an'——"

"Sure we will!" said Con painfully, through his battered lips. "We'll paint the town so dommed red they'll think it's afire."

As they passed out through the door, Con looked up at Dan's frowning, dominant face, and said wistfully:

"Ah, Dan! If a policeman would only hov come in an' tried to arrist us! The two of us, Dan!"

"Maybe," said Dan thoughtfully, "maybe we could find one, Con."

Con giggled like a schoolboy.

"Ah, ye bucko!" he gurgled happily. "I hope the poor devil we do find is a single mon. Sure I'm thot tinder-hearted about the women."

Young Dan stood on the landing stage at Camp Seventeen, watching the little stern-wheel steamer struggle laboriously against the swift current of the Skeena River, as she rounded the sharp bend and poked her blunt nose shoreward. Behind him, the grade of the railroad, a thin ribbon of gray, hemmed the base of the mountains that towered sheer from the river's brink; just across the grade, the bunk houses, cook shack, and commissary buildings squatted in a little clearing; and farther up the mountainside, almost hidden among the giant spruce and hemlock, nestling closely under the shelter

of their interlocking branches, was his own little cottage.

A man passing on the grade back of him hailed out:

"Looking for the new foreman up on to-day's boat, Mr. Morrissey?"

"Yes," young Dan called back. "He ought to be aboard."

The boat ran alongside the flimsy little staging, the light gangplank was run hastily out, and old Dan stepped ashore. The plank was as quickly pulled in, the engine bell in the little boat rang twice, and she chuffed noisily out into the stream.

"Why, dad!" said young Dan blankly. "Why—why, dad!"

They stood alone on the little wharf over the humming water of the swift, rushing river, looking at one another.

"Son," said old Dan quietly, "I've something to tell you before there's anything else said. I'm all in, boy. They got me at last. I'm—I'm flat broke, Danny. Stripped clean of everything I ever had. Now, that's out."

"Dad!" said young Dan. His arm went round the old man's shoulders. "Don't you care, dad! Don't you care a bit."

The eager, sympathetic words fairly tumbled over themselves.

"I'm doing fine here, dad; honest I am. I'm doing fine. I've got a fine little place here. Don't you care, dad, not a bit. I'll show you! Don't you worry at all! I'll fix it all! I'll take care of you, dad! I'll—"

"You'll what?"

Little red spots burned in old Dan's cheeks.

"Now, don't you worry one little bit, dad," young Dan went on soothingly. "I'll take care of you, and—"

"Young man!" old Dan interrupted. "You'll be mighty busy from now on taking care of your job, or you won't have any."

His voice was very stern, but it had

a funny little quake in it, and he blinked his eyes fast.

"I'm the new foreman of this camp, and don't you imagine because you happen to be my son that you'll get any special favors from me."

He tried hard to scowl, but only grinned a bit foolishly. One tear slipped out, and ran down his cheek. Some more followed. He grabbed the staring boy in his arms with a yelp of pure joy, and a moment later the two were locked in a bear hug, doing a crazy, hilarious dance, and in imminent danger of an impromptu swim.

"Come on," said old Dan, after a time. "Take me to the commissary, and let me get the feel of some good, old hobnailed boots on my feet, and then——" He smiled queerly, and a far-away look came into his eyes. "We'll have a look at that kid."

"By the by," he said, as they trudged up the trail, "what did you call her?"

"Why," said young Dan, "Kathleen, of course."

Old Dan nodded.

"Of course!" he said.

They sat on the rude porch of young Dan's little cottage that evening. Old Dan held the sleeping baby close in his big arms. The late twilight deepened; the faint, rustling noises of the little folk of the wood came to their ears, from out the velvet, sweet-odored dark about them; the wind hummed a drowsy hymn of content in the high branches overhead. Far below, the river gurgled, softly, ceaselessly, mysteriously. The spirit of utter peace was on all things.

Old Dan spoke.

"I have been," he said slowly; "I have been hellish poor, and I have been hellish rich. Both were—just that."

There was a long silence. He cleared his throat, and continued softly:

"I wish your mother were here, Danny. I would be—just happy."





THE CATAclysm

BY
Louise Lennard

MY articulated skeleton was lying at full length on our Hepplewhite sideboard, which was surrounded by laundry baskets full of books. A brass bedstead, reduced to its component units, leaned against the white, paneled wall; beside it stood a bookcase packed with sheets and blankets and adorned with such bric-a-brac as flatirons and broilers; a reel of garden hose was in another corner, partly concealed by a blue-and-white mattress, upon which an old automobile tire and an oil stove reposed with scandalous abandon. At the head of the dining table, upon a piano stool and surrounded by barrels, sat my mother.

I drew an inlaid taboret to the table, and sat down.

"Poor mother!" I said. "How has everything gone?"

"Things got soaking wet, of course," she began, "but only a picture glass and that hideous little plaster cast that one of your G. P.'s gave you were actually broken."

"G. P.," it may be well to mention, is the physician's private code signal for Grateful Patient; it explains the ugly water colors and knick-knacks that you see in doctors' offices and waiting rooms.

"You've managed wonderfully!" I applauded. "I've hated my profession to-day—dragging me away from you when there was all this moving going on, and in the rain, too. There's a regular epidemic of influenza around town."

"Well," she said, with a sigh. "The

worst of the moving is over. I went over the old house from top to bottom when I came away, and——"

It is not surprising that with a hard day's work behind and a plate of Marie's cream of tomato soup before me, I failed to notice her abrupt pause, until:

"The cat!" she burst out suddenly. "Oh, Henry! The cat!"

I looked around the room.

"Where?" I asked at last, wondering idly, as I spoke, why Louis was making for the butler's pantry, over chairs and rolls of rugs, with such unwonted haste.

"Louis!" My mother's voice stopped him in his tracks.

"Madame?"

"Did you bring the cat?"

"I will ask Marie, madame," he said, and scurried off.

Where "yes" or "no" may lead to a break in the *entente cordiale* you may always trust a Frenchman to "go and see." Louis was French, and, as you have probably surmised, our butler. We thought that it looked prosperous to keep a butler; a doctor must look prosperous if he would be so. Louis was really only a sort of butler. He really did, in our establishment, all things that his fat wife, Marie, refused to do, including everything from making beds to making tarts. The only thing he didn't make was trouble; Marie took care of that.

Our good Louis presently issued from the infernal region of the kitchen, where his wife was the supreme being.

"Madame," he announced to my

mother, "Marie, she did not bring those cat. It makes the bad chance, madame. Those cat, they do not wan' to make those change to those new 'ouse, madame."

"She'll starve! Where did you leave her?"

"Marie, she left her in the cellar, madame. But those cat, they do not starve."

"No," returned my mother decisively, "she won't starve because you must go right down there after dinner and get her."

"Don't you think," I suggested mildly, when he had left the room, "that to-morrow morning would do as well? It's pouring now."

"They should have thought of that before," my mother returned crisply. "It's their cat."

After dinner my mother went as usual to the kitchen. She had scarcely left the room when the shrill voice of Marie echoed through the house, in what was unmistakably the clarion note of battle. I was moving up to reinforce my mother's forces when I met her retreating with as much dignity as possible. A dangerous light gleamed in her eyes.

"What's the row?" I asked.

"Marie won't let Louis go for the cat!" she said angrily.

"Well, it is a beastly night."

"It's not the weather," she elucidated. "I told them that to-morrow would do. She says it's bad luck, though, of course, it's really bad temper."

"I hope you asserted yourself, mother?"

"I told them," she said crisply, "to get the cat or leave."

"And they——"

"Were downright impudent."

"Oh, ho!" I cried. "They were, eh? Then here's where I take a hand. If they go, they go to-night!"

I strode to the kitchen, and gave my ultimatum. The riot which ensued was brief, but furious. It ended with my sending them upstairs to get their things. Inside an hour they left, mak-

ing the night more hideous than ever with staccato French as they departed.

"It is going to be hard work to get new ones at this time of year," my mother sighed, "especially with the house all upset."

"It will come out all right, dear," I consoled. "It always does, you know. I'll wash the dishes."

"Oh, no," she said. "That's not what I want you to do. You will have enough to do attending to the cat."

"The cat! Surely not to-night, mother?"

"Of course," she said, regarding me with an expression of hurt surprise. "What else was all this row about? Aside from the question of humane-ness, you must remember that I am president of the Society of the Friends of Dumb Brutes."

"Just as you say, dear," I gave in with a sigh, feeling like a dumb brute myself. "It is a terrible night, but I'll go if you say so."

The pathos did not work.

"That's right, Henry. You are a good son," my mother answered. "Now, you'd better hurry."

"I ought to run in and have a look at Mrs. Clay, anyway," I said, trying to give up pleasantly. "She gave a dinner last night."

"Hmf!" sniffed my mother.

She had never cared for Mrs. Clay, though that lady was my best patient. To be sure, Mrs. Clay was very rich and very autocratic, but then she also had dyspepsia. She would not diet; the dyspepsia consequently persisted, and I was constantly commanded to relieve it. The lady's gratitude, upon relief, was touching. She praised me to the skies, with the result that I owed no small part of my flourishing practice to her influence.

And Mrs. Clay's friends, like Mrs. Clay herself, had the commendable habit of paying their bills, and the unusual one of paying them promptly. The very cottage which we had just left had been rented to me at a low figure by my influential patron, who explained that she wished to have me close at hand in case of trouble after

dinner. The cottage had not suited us so well in its arrangement as its price. I had to use the living room as a reception room. As my practice grew, annoyance from this grew with it. But then, so did my income. At last we gave the cottage up. It was toward our former home that my motor was presently spluttering its way.

As I turned into the short drive, and caught sight of the house standing, like a ghost, deserted in the rain, I had a feeling of extraordinary loneliness—a craving for the welcoming lights to which I was accustomed: luminous streaks filtering out into the darkness through soft curtains, under shades half drawn, like drowsy eyelids.

As I shut off my motor, I heard the familiar roar of rain on the porch roof. I alighted in wet blackness, ascended the front steps, and, stopping before the door, drew out my keys, and fumbled for the familiar flat one which had been my open sesame on so many other nights. After trying several without success, I slipped off my gauntlet, and felt again. The old front-door key was missing. Suddenly I remembered that I had given it up that morning to Mrs. Clay's agent.

My first irritated impulse was to abandon the relief expedition until the morrow, but this idea gave way before the thought of mother's gnawing sense of duty, which gnaws through her at me. Moving along the porch, I tried the several windows which opened from it. They were fastened; mother is very careful about locking windows. Leaving cover, I went to the cellar door. Locked! The rain dripping from my hat brim began to trickle down my neck. I turned a wet coat collar up against my neck. It was like a cold compress. Then, stumbling through slimy, mushy flower beds, I made the circuit of the house, trying each window that I came to. Hope was almost dead as I reached the back of the house, and, placing a hand upon the dripping sash of a kitchen window, gave it a perfunctory push. It slipped up easily.

Had I suddenly found myself in bath robe, slippers, and an easy-chair before

a grate fire, I could not have experienced a greater sense of comfort. The straddling of the soaking window sill was nothing. In a moment I stood, victorious, within.

The kitchen was pitch dark. Remembering the electric light above the range, I charted a careful course across the room. Vague passes of the hand in upper blackness found the fixture. Click! I turned the button. The room remained in utter darkness.

Never, I think, have I appreciated my mother's splendid housekeeping less than at that moment. Mother is very careful about everything. I knew at once that she had telephoned the electric-light company to cut the current off. Obliging public-service corporation! How quickly it does everything!

If the good habits of my mother circumvented me, my own bad habits helped. I smoke; a box of safety matches is as much a part of my daily equipment as a necktie. I drew the match box from my pocket, and, after some little difficulty occasioned by the dampness, struck a light, and found the cellar stairs. As I began the steep descent, a sudden draft blew out the match. However, I was familiar with the stairs, and proceeded in the dark, to the accompaniment of whistling wind and a roar of driving rain outside.

The house was damp and cold; it vibrated and creaked dismally. My feet made a loud, startling noise on the stairs. A deserted house is always a dismal, lonely place, but it is worst in darkness on a stormy night. I felt myself abandoned in a solitude that ached and echoed.

Then my foot came down on something. It was something soft, yielding, and alive. I realized that I was not alone.

"Fs-ss-st! Fs-ss-st! *Wa-ow!*"

With an ill-natured complaint and an instant's clawing at my leg, the thing was gone. I was startled, unnerved. Had I been reaching out of bed for matches and placed my hand unexpectedly upon the head of a crouching burglar, I could not have been more shaken.

After somewhat regaining my composure, I resumed my gingerly descent, and presently became aware of a pair of green, luminous eyes which peered at me fixedly from an adjacent shelf. Again I stopped.

"Kitty, kitty, kitty!"

The eyes remained fixed spots.

"Come, puss!"

The cat did not so much as blink.

I tried to make my voice sound like a woman's.

"Puss, puss, puss!"

Perhaps the imitation was not very good. I do not think it was. The cat did not seem to think so, either. Its eyes remained fixed and malevolent.

Raising a hand, I leaned slowly in her direction. When I had all but touched her, I made a sudden lunge. My head came against a beam. I saw a thousand pairs of fiery eyes, and heard a spitting noise. Then a furnace pipe creaked above my head, and a shower of fine dust descended on me. How odd that I had lived in this house three years, without knowing that beam was there. It shows how unobserving people are! It was going to make a big bump on my forehead. And odd, too, was the fact that the cat actually seemed to be afraid of me. This struck me as annoying and unreasonable when I had come in all this rain to save her from starvation.

After lighting many matches and looking for her to no purpose by their feeble illumination, I burned my fingers. I must have more light. Fumbling my way to the cellar door, I unlocked it, went out into the blast, and took the oil lamps from my car. With their aid, I presently located the object of solicitude up in a corner amid a maze of beams and furnace pipes.

I determined to use cunning. Finding a battered cup, I placed it on the floor, made pouring motions over it, and stepped back, saying enticingly: "Milk, milk, milk!"

The cat did not stir; she might have been carved in stone, but for her baleful, shining eyes.

What could be the cause of her unfriendly attitude, I wondered. Then

suddenly I remembered having heard Louis and Marie speaking French to her. The thing that I could not remember was the word they used.

"*Chat, chat, chat!*" I tried, but knew as I did so that it was not right. The cat knew it, too. What was the French equivalent of puss, puss, puss? I racked my brains without result. However, mother was a good French scholar; she would know. Taking up a lamp, I made my way upstairs to the telephone.

"Number?" Central responded quickly to the signal. Her voice sounded pleasant in the desolation.

"Four six eight, please."

There was a click, a moment's silence, then:

"Service discontinued on this line," she said.

"It's a mistake!" I cried. "It's my line! This is Doctor Barnard speaking! I must positively——"

"Sorry," said the operator airily. "Service discontinued."

"You don't understand!" I howled into the transmitter. "You're making a horrible blunder! It's a matter of life and death!"

But the telephone was dead, nor would repeated furious shakings of the hook produce response. Beside myself with helpless rage, I took my lamp, and went back to the cellar.

The cat had not moved. I had a passionate desire to just get my hands upon her once. Putting down the lamp, I moved a packing box across the floor to a point beneath her perch. Then, with the battered cup in hand, I mounted it. Save for an added tenseness of position and grimness of gaze, the cat remained immovable.

"Poor pussy! Nice pussy!" I drawled in hypocritical, caressing cadence, holding the cup toward her and maneuvering it to draw her attention from the free hand with which I meant to snatch her.

"Po-o-or puss!"

Suddenly I lunged.

"Fs-ss-st!"

I felt her fur slip through my eager, straining fingers. She was gone—this

time beyond the confines of the cellar which did not run beneath the entire house, among the beams in between the ground and the floor of the living room. To catch her in those labyrinthine spaces where neither eyes nor arms could reach was no work for an honest doctor. Trappers, poisoners, dynamiters, assassins, might contrive to catch her there, but, as for me, I should go home to mother.

I got down from the box, took up my lamps, and left the cellar, giving the door a vicious slam behind me. The rain had not abated. It was too late to call on Mrs. Clay, nor was I, for that matter, in any frame of mind to listen to complaints. I gave the crank of my machine an angry spin, got in, and splattered home.

Mother heard me enter the house. Her bedroom door opened as I reached the upper hall.

"Where have you put her, Henry?" she demanded, blinking at me with sleepy eyes.

I explained.

"Poor thing!" said mother.

"Oh, never mind pitying me," I said, glowing with her sympathy.

"I wasn't," said my mother. "I was pitying the cat. She'll be famished, the poor thing."

"I hope so!" I retorted hotly.

"Don't be brutal, Henry!"

"I feel brutal!" I cried out. "I loathe cats! Once and for all, I want it understood that I will never have another cat in this establishment! They are nasty, sneaking, treacherous, spitting, soul-destroying devils!"

With a stern look at me, my mother closed her door.

It had been a very wearing day, you see.

She was forgiving, I penitent, at breakfast, the next morning.

"If I could leave the house," she said, "I'd go and see what I could do."

"All I need," I answered, "is the French for puss."

My mother said that the proper cry was: "*Mi, mi, mi.*"

"I ought to have reminded you be-

fore you went," she reproached herself. "She used to come running when Louis and Marie said '*Mi, mi, mi.*'"

"Running?"

"Yes."

"Fast?" I asked. I liked to hear her tell about it.

"Quite fast," my mother answered.

"*Mi, mi, mi, mi,*" I crooned to myself.

What a charming sound it made. It was like the mew of a kitten, sweet, soft, plaintive. Our call of "puss" or "kitty" sounded harsh compared with it. And what a pretty picture is made by a cat running rapidly toward the one who summons it with such a sweet and gentle call!

Delaying a number of professional calls I had to make, I hurried after breakfast to the other house. It was open. Painters and paper hangers were at work within. Taking from my car the bottle of milk which I had brought, I hastened to the cellar.

There was the cat in her old lair among the beams and furnace pipes. Without speaking, or seeming to notice her, I took the battered cup and filled it ostentatiously.

Then I rose, stepped back, looked at her, and pronounced the magic words.

The cat had been regarding me closely with those fine wild eyes of hers; eyes like those of lions and tigers looking at their trainers. What a wonderful power lies in words and in the human voice! How marvelous is the control, by words, of trainers over beasts!

"*Mi, mi, mi!*" I repeated softly.

The stillness of her pose began to disturb me. I tried variations of the soothing sounds, beginning with a delicate falsetto and running, as I began to fear that I had failed again, into less alluring and more violent tones.

My final shout of "*Mi, mi, mi!*" was like an awful imprecation, and as I uttered it I stooped and seized a piece of coal. I am glad to say I checked myself before I threw the coal. It would have only made the matter worse. I dropped it as I heard footsteps on the stairs.

"Was you yelling?" asked one of the paper hangers, coming halfway down to look at me.

"No; just calling my cat," I explained.

"Oh!" And he started up the stairs again.

I followed. The men were working in the living room.

"Boys," I said to them, trying to assume an unruffled manner, "there is a cat in the cellar which was left by mistake when we moved away from this house yesterday. She seems to have become rather wild, and I——"

"Oh, no," put in one of the men. "She's not wild, doctor. She was playing around gay as you please when I come this morning."

"If that is the case," I replied, trying not to show disgust at this senseless fabrication, "there is an easy way for you to make some money. Catch her and keep her until I come back this afternoon. I'll give five dollars to the man who does it."

"All right, doctor," they chorused.

As I left the house, they were all putting down their tools.

The men were not at work when I returned late in the day. The ground floor of the house was quite deserted, but I heard voices in the cellar, and descended. They were all there. One was standing on the packing box which I had used the night before. He had a clothes pole in his hands, and was poking with it in the dark recesses between the beams that ran beyond the cellar walls.

"I felt her then!" he cried, in an excited voice. "Get ready, boys!"

The three others closed in around him, holding the white cloths of their trade spread out expectantly.

The man on the box poked again.

"She don't seem to be there now," he sighed wearily.

The others relaxed.

"I don't know what's come over her, doctor," said the man with the clothes pole, turning to me a face covered with dust and perspiration. "Somebody must of scared her. Why, this morning, she was——"

"I'll raise the offer to ten dollars," **T** interrupted, not wishing to hear further perjury.

The men, who looked tired, brightened visibly at this.

"We been here ever since you left," said one. "I had my hand on her once. See what she done to it."

He held it up for inspection. There were long scratches down the back.

"Fine!" I encouraged. "You did pretty well to get near enough for that."

Then, as it was growing late, I left them, promising to return the first thing in the morning.

I was true to my word, but was shocked, on reaching the cottage, early the next day, to find the men plying their trade upstairs.

"How's this?" I demanded. "I thought you boys were going to catch that cat?"

"We caught something else," said one of them, with a sheepish grin. "The boss come around just after you was gone last evening."

"Why don't you get Doc Haskins after her?" suggested another. "He's hell on cats, he is."

"Doctor" Haskins is the local veterinarian. The idea struck me as a good one, so, hastening to a neighboring house, I telephoned to him. He said that he would see to it that afternoon.

I thanked him.

"Oh, that's all right, doctor," he rumbled in his self-important way, "always glad to oblige a colleague."

"Telephone me when you have her, will you?" I asked.

He said he would.

"Doctor" Haskins did not telephone that night or the next day. Each time my phone rang I hoped to hear his voice; each time I met with disappointment. Gloomy forebodings began to fill my mind. At last, in desperation, I called him up myself.

"How about it?" I asked him. The thing was such a bugbear to me that I had a loathing for the very word "cat," and wished to refrain from speaking it.

"The cat?" he said, and it seemed to me he bawled the word unnecessarily. "The cat? I was up twice to see about

the cat. The conditions surrounding that cat are difficult. The cat gets under the floors, you see. Now, if the cellar was under the whole house, it would be different, but as it is, why, you can't get near that cat. She's——"

The insistent repetition of the detested word irritated me to distraction. My head rang and spun with it.

"Dash it!" I cried. "Do you suppose I don't know that? Haven't I been trying to get near her? Why, you—you——" I was about to say something that I would regret, but checked myself in time.

"You are an expert," I finished lamely. "You understand these—these animals. You can work wonders. It is by accomplishing things where others fail that you have built up your high standing in this community."

Haskins showed fine patience while I delivered this eulogy.

"Ahem! Thank you, doctor; thank you. Of course I'm a busy man. You're probably busy yourself this weather. And you know this cat business takes up a lot of time, and——"

"I expect to pay for it," I put in hastily. "I'll pay whatever is right, but I simply *must* get that cat!"

It seemed to me my voice had risen, risen, until the last word came out as a shrill, tremulous shriek.

"It sure is funny how fond folks gets of pets," he ruminated.

"Fond!" I echoed scornfully. "Do you suppose I——"

"What do you want her for then?"

"To chloroform!" I hissed.

"Well!" said Haskins, with a chuckle. "Why didn't you say so? If that's all, why I can furnish you with lots of cats."

"No, no!" I corrected. "It's not for experiment; nothing of that sort. I don't experiment on cats. I want to chloroform her because I don't want her; the only reason I want her is that I don't want to leave an animal in an empty house in want of food."

Haskins caught the idea, but still sounded dubious.

"Come, now," I urged. "You'll try

it, won't you, just to oblige a"—I gulped—"a colleague?"

My mother entered my office in time to hear my last appeal.

"Why, Henry!" she cried, as I hung up the receiver. "What possessed you to call that awful, pompous horse doctor a colleague?"

"The cat!" I cried.

Days wore on slowly; days which seemed to me a blur of visits and hopeless efforts to entrap our voluntary exile. With every one that passed, my hopes of Haskins grew more feeble. At last I called him up again.

He answered my inquiries with something near to gruffness, declaring that he had called upon the cat six times, at two dollars a call, and that he could not trouble with her further.

With this, my flickering spirits went out. Life had become a nightmare. Like the besieged citizens of Paris, I had cat for breakfast, luncheon, and dinner. Even the lack of servants—admittedly a topic which has splendid possibilities—gave way before the all-absorbing feline.

And there were other cares to face. Aside from being without servants, I was under more expense than I had been at the old house, yet, as ill luck would have it, a sudden epidemic of good health spread through the town. Seldom had I known such leisure; never had leisure been less welcome. I spent long idle days in helping mother put up curtains, hang pictures, arrange bookshelves, and talk about the cat. Meanwhile, I wondered secretly if our change of base had been a wise one. Could it be that the cults and isms of the last few years had begun to tell upon my practice? Heretofore I had merely been amused when a patient drifted to the shallows and discovered, with astonishment and great delight, the possession of a soul, or a mind superior to matter, or an aura, or some other interesting trimming to be brooded on to the everlasting edification of the ego. Now I began to wonder if there was not a serious menace in these things. Of only one thing

could I be sure; my charity patients would continue to stand bravely by *materia medica* until the last.

It was with thoughts of cats and cataclysms in my mind that, on my way to visit one of my poor but staunch supporters, I saw the carriage of a young physician who had but lately come to town standing before the sacred door of Mrs. Clay. A strange physician at the house of my pet patient—a shocking spectacle!

The explanation was not long in coming. On reaching home, I found upon my desk a letter addressed to me in Mrs. Clay's strong, familiar handwriting.

Mrs. Clay's letter began as usual:

DEAR DOCTOR BARNARD: I have been much surprised to learn that when you moved from my cottage you left a cat to starve in the cellar, where it has been crying pitifully ever since. My caretaker has fed it daily, but you can hardly expect me to assume this duty permanently. Kindly let me know at once what you mean to do with the unfortunate creature.

I also wish you to be so good as to refrain, in future, from interfering with the workmen whom I am paying to paint and paper the cottage. Frankly, I am astonished at your actions, especially your display of cruelty to a dumb brute.

Please send me a bill for your services to date, and do not trouble to attend me further.

Having written thus, the lady added the subscription: "Yours very truly."

The letter not only angered, but alarmed me. Could it indeed be that a diabolical, elusive cat which I had hardly seen until I had begun to devote my life to catching it—and had seen so little, even then—could it be that such a thing could be the destruction of the practice which I had so laboriously built up? It seemed it could. Mrs. Clay was an influential woman. Her likes and dislikes were strong. She had sent me my best patients—would she now remove them? The doldrums which had struck my practice indicated that she had.

I pocketed the letter, determined to conceal the blow from my mother until I had decided to meet it. Poor mother! She was even at that moment at an employment bureau, hunting servants.

She returned presently, and came to my office.

"What luck?" I asked, trying to speak cheerfully.

"None," she sighed. "I saw one woman who seemed to be all right, but when she heard that I was Doctor Barnard's mother, as she called me, she declined to come, for the reason, if you please, that she was an anti-vivisectionist! Nothing I could say would convince her that you didn't vivisection. When I pinned her down, she said that she had heard that we left the cellar of the old house full of the bones and skeletons of vivisected animals, not to mention dying creatures. How do you suppose she came by such a crazy tale?"

The story struck me like another blow upon an already dazed head. Given a cat in the cellar of a doctor's house, and what a Bluebeard's castle gossip could build! What a mountain of fiction sprung out of a molehill of fact! There was something supernatural, something uncanny in the cat's invasion of my life.

I rose from my desk, went upstairs, and got my shotgun and some shells. Then, taking the back stairs, I quietly left the house, got my car, and drove to the old house. It was growing dark as I stopped and alighted in the drive. Removing the gun from its case, I loaded it, and, with the weapon in one hand and an oil lamp from the car in the other, entered by the cellar door, which, since my first visit, I had carefully left on the latch.

Oh, joy! There was the cat in her accustomed place. She did not stir. My troubles were about to end!

I set down the lamp, stepped back, and sighted very carefully.

"Who's that?" came a woman's voice, down the cellar stairs.

I had a mad desire to fire first and explain afterward, but was afraid of frightening her. What was a woman doing in the house, I wondered.

"Who are you?" I asked. I fear my tone was not polite.

A piercing shriek was the answer. I heard the sound of running feet on the floor above.

"What's the matter?" demanded another voice.

"A burglar in the cellar!"

"No such thing!" I cried, moving toward the stairs. "Don't be frightened, ladies. It's all right."

There came the sound of several screams and more running about.

"Nothing to be afraid of!" I shouted, as I reached the top step. "I'm a doctor. It's all right."

I heard quick words in the dining room. Then suddenly the swinging door from the butler's pantry opened, and a young woman appeared.

From her height, one might have taken her for a little girl. She was hardly five feet tall, but her figure and her carriage were those of graceful womanhood. Her coloring was the most perfect pink and white and gold that I have ever seen, her eyes big and blue, and her mouth the perfect rosebud that one sees in pictures. Fancy such looks as those behind an automatic pistol—one of those things which squirts bullets like a hose squirts water—and you will see her as I saw her. The pistol was aimed point-blank at me. "Don't shoot!" I cried. "It's a mistake!"

"You'll find it was!" she said, with cold irony. "Put down that gun!"

Idiot that I was, I had carried my shotgun up with me. I leaned it hurriedly against the wall, protesting meanwhile that I was not a burglar.

"Now, back away from it!" the woman ordered. "Put your hands up—high! There! Now, then; what were you doing in our cellar?"

"I came to get my cat," I said nervously. "I wish you'd stop pointing that thing at me. Women don't know how to handle firearms. It might go off."

"Of course it might," she retorted cruelly. "You should have thought of that before you broke in."

"Well, I can't hurt you now," I said meekly, "and your pistol makes me so nervous I can't talk straight."

"You'd better talk straight!" she advised in a steely voice. "What's this foolishness about a cat?"

"My dear young lady," I replied, col-

lecting myself as best I could, "I occupied this house before you came. It has been vacant for two weeks, and I have—"

"You've been living in the cellar all that time," she said. "You're a tramp; that's what you are!"

"I am a doctor," I returned, with dignity. "I'm Doctor Barnard."

"You don't look like a doctor," she said. "You have a bad face, and you're dirty."

"If I'm dirty," I returned, "it's because I've been in the cellar and handling the furnace pipes. The house was vacant when I came yesterday, and I believed it to be vacant still. Our servants left a cat here by mistake, and I have been coming to try and get it; that's all. Now, *please* be careful with that pistol."

She heeded my request to the extent of slightly lowering the muzzle.

"It would hit my feet if it went off now," I protested.

She sniffed.

"Did you need a shotgun to catch your cat?" she asked scornfully.

"Yes!" I returned whole-heartedly. "I've tried everything else."

She seemed to think it over for a moment.

"Maybe you *are* a doctor," she granted doubtfully at last, "but I can't be sure. If you are, I'm sorry to have to keep my pistol pointed in your direction until your identity is established."

"I quite understand," I said, as politely as I could, "but I hope you'll be careful. I'm awfully sorry for having occasioned you the least alarm, but then—"

"You haven't," she returned coolly.

"May I ask your name?" I said.

"I'm Miss Palmer," she returned, with a dry smile.

I bowed, and also smiled. It was an odd sort of introduction.

"Now, follow me—doctor," she said, taking my shotgun in her left hand, and backing toward the dining room.

I followed, keeping as far off as I could. She led me to the room which had been my office.

"You can do the telephoning," she

said. "Call up Mrs. Clay, and ask her to come over and identify you."

"Won't some one else do?" I begged. "You see, Mrs. Clay and I aren't on very good terms just now, and——"

"You do as I say," she ordered, looking at me suspiciously. "Mrs. Clay told me that you were her physician. The Clays are the only people in the neighborhood we know."

Without further argument, I called Mrs. Clay's number.

"You needn't explain the situation if it embarrasses you," she said, not unkindly. "Just tell her to come over—or Mr. Clay would do, if he's at home."

It was, by good fortune, Mr. Clay who answered the call.

"Mr. Clay," I said, "this is Doctor Barnard. 'I am over at your cottage, with Miss Palmer, and I wish——'"

"Hello, Barnard!" he cried. "We have been trying to locate you for the last hour. Come right over, will you? Mrs. Clay wants to see you as soon as possible."

"Please say to Mrs. Clay," I replied stiffly, "that she will hear from me by to-morrow morning's mail."

"Oh, come now, Barnard!" he said, in pleading tones. "Surely you won't act——"

"Mr. Clay," I broke in, "circumstances beyond my control, which I will make clear to you later, make it impossible for me to come until you have identified me."

"What in——" he began, and then broke off with: "Well, I'll be right over, then."

Hanging up the receiver, I turned to the young lady.

"Miss Palmer," I said, "I should like to explain to you that we—my mother and I—are not the sort of people to leave a cat to starve in an empty house. The cat belonged to servants of ours, who left suddenly. It didn't know me. I have made daily efforts to catch it, and have employed others, including a veterinary, to no purpose. The cat has caused me endless troubles, in ways which I will not now relate. I have been charged with vivisection; my practice has been undermined. The cat has

done it all. The more I have tried to save it, the more trouble it has brought upon me. After the last calamity, my primal instincts of self-preservation were aroused—the same instincts which led you to come at me with a pistol. I determined to kill the cat. Hence I came here with my shotgun. I only ask, Miss Palmer, that you conceal the gun, and keep the fact that I had intended to visit violent death upon the creature a secret. My mother is unaware of it; she would consider it the rankest cruelty. So would others who cannot know the torments that the cat has brought upon me."

Miss Palmer smiled a little, and concealed the gun. There came a sound of steps upon the porch outside.

"I want to ask a favor of you in return," she said.

"It shall be granted," I replied, "if it is in my power."

"Give us the cat," she said. "I saw three mice here this afternoon. I'm horribly afraid of mice."

"She is yours!" I cried. "All yours, to have and to hold forever!"

There came a ring at the doorbell.

"It's very likely Mr. Clay," said she. "You might let him in. Mother is out, and the maids are afraid to come down."

I did so.

"Good evening, Barnard," he cried cordially, as he shook my hand, which was, if the truth be told, already shaking. "Now, what's this business about identification, eh?"

"Then it is Doctor Barnard!" cried Miss Palmer, who had gone to the living room. She set her pistol on the top of the grand piano.

"Why, what's this?" Clay exclaimed.

Miss Palmer had gone white. She moved her lips as though to answer. Then I saw her sway, and rushed to her side, only in time to catch her as she fell. She had fainted.

As Clay assisted me in bringing her to, I explained matters. He laughed much more than the situation seemed to me to justify, but I knew that I could depend upon him to keep silence.

"You won't have to stay long?" he

asked anxiously, as Miss Palmer began to revive. "Mrs. Clay has had a frightful indigestion since last night. She had some young doctor there all morning. He can't do anything. You'll hurry over, won't you, Barnard?"

I asked if he knew about the letter.

"Lord, yes!" he sighed. "I'm supposed to fix that up with you. My heavens, Barnard, the things I have to fix up when these attacks come on! You won't hold it against her; there's a good chap. She packed the cook and waitress off this morning. Oh, it's awful!"

"It won't hurt her to wait a little," I said coldly. "I'll come when Miss Palmer is all right again."

Clay gave a wry smile.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll just wait for you."

I was late in getting home. The door was opened for me by a maid in cap and apron. My mother was standing in the hall.

"We have some dinner set aside for you," she said cheerily. "It's a good dinner, too. We have Norah and Katie here now, the cook and maid who used to be with Mrs. Clay."

The tide had turned. Katie's cooking was perhaps too good for a dyspeptic like Mrs. Clay, but it was just right for me. The cat was well provided for, and Mrs. Clay had learned her lesson and come into line again. And, above all these things, I had gained another patient.

Miss Palmer's health was excellent, 'tis true. I have never been called upon to visit her professionally since I brought her from that faint. But no doctor was ever so well paid for any call as I for that one. We are engaged.

Gloria—and isn't Gloria a lovely name?—Gloria and I were sitting in her living room last night, discussing plans for June. Of course her mother will give up the cottage. She intends to live with her son in Utica.

"Will your mother take the—ah—the cat?" I asked.

"How can you ask such a thing?" cried Gloria.

"But might we not have trouble, you know, in getting her away from here and up to our house?" I suggested.

As though in answer, something purred and rubbed against my leg

It was that dear old cat.

SET FAIR


CLOUDY to-day! That's what they say,
The prophets of the weather.
Don't heed them, please; their prophecies
Are foolish altogether.

It's fair to-day, and fair 'twill stay
Forever and forever;
So laugh with me, for I can see
No trace of cloud whatever.

Jack called last night, his eyes alight—
Now skies are blue above me.
Ah, how can they show aught of gray
When *he* has sworn to love me?

If you were I, you'd know just why
My heart is like a feather.
For Jack's a dear, and when he's near—
Let's talk about the weather.

L. E. JOHNSTON.



PAT THE PEACEFUL

By
Elliott Flower

OUR last night in camp was enlivened by the presence of Pat Moran. We had decided to start back for civilization the following day, to see if word had been received from Alphabet Applegate's father with regard to the purchase of the Otis Ranch, and Jim Stutt, our guide, was making preparations for an early morning start when Pat appeared.

We were indebted to an accident for Pat's company. He was a teamster, and his wagon broke down while he was freighting a load of goods through the mountains. It took so long a time to make the necessary repairs that he found himself in the vicinity of our camp and many miles from his destination when the sun was setting, so he decided to pay us a visit.

Jim Stutt knew him, of course, for Jim knew everybody, and he extended cordial greeting when Pat walked into camp.

"How are ye?" returned Pat. "Have ye a place be th' fire f'r a lone man?"

"I fawncy we have, old chap," put in Applegate.

"Oho!" exclaimed Pat, turning to Applegate. "Ye're English!"

"And I'd take you to be Irish, don't you know," remarked Applegate.

"'Tis no cr-redit that ye guessed it," said Pat, "f'r I have th' marks all over me, from me tongue to me toes, like ye-ersilf. But there's no r-reason f'r

the wan or th' other iv us to be ashamed iv it."

"I say, old chap," exclaimed Applegate, "that's rawther unexpected, coming from an Irishman."

"Oho!" laughed Pat. "I'm a fri'nd of th' English out iv Ireland, an' th' farther away from Ireland they are, th' betther I like thim."

Applegate laughed, and Stutt introduced them.

"I fawncy you're a good sort," remarked Applegate.

"Th' same to you," returned Pat, "an' may we have an inj'yable time scr-rappin' whin I'm through with me horses. I lift thim at th' r-road, there bein' small chance to dr-rag th' wagon over threes to git to ye here. I'll be goin' back to look afther thim."

Stutt went with him, and it took them only a short time to make such provision for the horses as was possible in the circumstances.

Pat proved to be a most entertaining companion when we were finally gathered about the fire. He was a small man, but quick, strong, and wiry. Applegate seemed to take quite a fancy to him, perhaps because of the contrast, for Applegate was big, deliberate of speech, and usually slow of movement.

"Huntin', I take it," remarked Pat.

"Yes," answered Applegate.

"Too much trouble," commented Pat. "I niver c'u'd abide throuble."

Applegate looked at him doubtfully.

"What kind of trouble?" he asked.

"Anny kind," replied Pat.

"Then," declared Applegate, "I fawncy you're no Irishman."

"Barrin' throuble with th' English," added Pat.

"My word!" ejaculated Applegate. "You have the Irish wit, don't you know. But I fawncy you're jesting."

"I'm that peaceful an' timid," insisted Pat, "that I was chased into this part iv th' counthry be r-rabbits."

"Rabbits!" repeated Applegate in amazement.

"An' I'm that peaceful an' timid," added Pat, "that I don't carry a gun."

"But, I say, old chap," expostulated Applegate, "it's the timid man that would carry a gun, don't you know?"

"Only if he's a fool," explained Pat. "'Tis th' felly that carries a gun that's fair game f'r anny wan ilse that carries a gun, but there's no cr-credit in shootin' a felly that's unarmed, and 'tis more dangerous, too, f'r it bars out th' silf-defence plea."

Stutt nodded his head approvingly.

"A man iv peace, like mesilf," Pat went on, "w'u'd have no chanst with a felly that c'u'd and w'u'd shoot quicker, so I'm th' safer unarmed, an' 'tis me own safety I'm considerin'. 'Tis so well known that if I happen to git gay some wan says: 'Don't pay no attention to th' little shrimp, f'r he has no gun, an' ye can't afford to shoot him.' Me repitation f'r peace has saved me life manny a time win I wanted f'r to fight."

Applegate pondered this rather involved explanation for several minutes, and even then seemed at a loss to know just what to say. The concluding sentence was particularly confusing.

"Me timper is undher betther control, too," added Pat, "whin I know that I'm like to be shot up if I go too far. So I go the other way whin it lüks like a ruction. Anny time th' lads see me r-runnin' down th' threet, there's a yell goes up iv 'Fight! Fight!' an' they all r-run th' other way f'r to see it. Me repitation is me life insurance, 'tis so."

"Most extraordinary Irishman I ever met!" commented Applegate.

"R-right ye are," agreed Pat, "an' wan iv th' wisest."

"But the rabbits, old chap," suggested Applegate. "I cawn't get over that, don't you know?"

"Oho! Th' r-rabbits!" exclaimed Pat. "'Twas thim that drove me from Wisconsin whin I was plannin' to settle down in peace an' comfort, accordin' to me disposition. Th' throuble they made fair sickened me, considerin' I'd done thim no har-rm. I niver aven shot wan iv thim, owin' to—— But I'll be comin' to that later."

"Y' see, 'twas all along iv me cousin Mike, who was livin' there whin I come. He's gr-reat f'r spoort, is Mike, an' he was waitin' f'r th' r-rabbits to git r-ripe. Ye have to have a freeze an' a shnow f'r th' spoort, he says, and th' winther was late that year. But it come! Oho! Yis, it come! There's only a bit iv a freeze an' a little shnow first, but it has Mike fair crazy."

"Gr-reat!" says Mike. "'We'll go down to me huntin' lodge on th' Yaharara River."

"Sounds like a collige yell," I says.

"'Tis a fine place," says he, "down near Lake Kegonsa."

"So we wint, carryin' guns, an' game bags, an' food, an' a few ton iv ammy-nition. 'Twas a short thrip be rail, an' thin we hired a wagon to thranspoort us to th' lodge. Lodge! Oho! 'Twas a shanty that a few iv thim had put up f'r huntin' an' fishin'. I was f'r goin' home whin I see it, havin' a likin' f'r peace an' comfort, but 'twas too late."

"How'll we git back?" I says, whin we'd been lift shiverin' on th' bank iv th' Yaharara.

"Tiliphone f'r th' wagon," says Mike. "We have all th' modhern improvements," he says.

"If so," I says, "tur-rn on th' shteam heat. Tilphones is all r-right," I says, "but they don't war-rm ye."

"Ye're too tinder," says Mike. "We'll have all th' fire we want whin we want it," he says, "but there's no use iv it till we git some r-rabbits."

"'Twas not th' r-rabbits I was thinkin' iv warmin', I says.

"But, annyhow, we wint afther thim first, thrampin' over th' rough ground an' through th' woods, with th' wind nippin' ye-er ears, and ye-er toes achin', an' ye-er fingers shtiff, an' Mike askin': 'Ain't it gr-reat?' An' we come back with a dhray load iv r-rabbits which I was carryin' hung to me like a butcher-shop display in th' holidays, f'r Mike did th' shootin' an' I was th' pack mule. I told ye I niver shot wan, an' now ye see th' r-reason."

"I cawn't see anything so very terrible in that, don't you know," remarked Applegate. "There's always some——"

"Wait!" interrupted Pat. "Th' wor-rst is yit to come. Afther we got th' fire goin', an' was part thawed out, an' had three cups iv hot coffee, I was beginnin' to think 'twas not so bad, whin Mike says: 'We might as well go fishin',' he says, 'f'r th' lake'll be freezin' over to-night, an' there'll be no more fishin' ixcipt through th' ice.'"

"'If th' lake ain't froze,' I says, 'I'm ashamed iv it, f'r it's th' only thing that ain't.'"

"But I let him make a fool iv me wanst more, an' we rowed down th' Yaharara, on which th' ice was a'ready formin', to th' lake, where Mike kep' me slowly freezin' to death till mid-night. I was doin' th' r-rowin', me fingers havin' tuk th' shape iv hooks an' stiffened that way. We niver got a fish, praise th' Lord! Handlin' below-zero fish is no joke, an' it was gittin' colder iv'ry minute.

"'Sufferin' snakes!' yells Mike all iv a sudden. 'We betther be goin' back. That there Yaharara freezes quick whin she starts,' he says, 'an' this is th' kind iv a night f'r her to do it. I f'rgot to remember that.'"

"Well, we walked back. We did so. Th' Yaharara was froze, an' th' lake was freezin' near shore, an' we got wet makin' a landin', an' had icicles on our toes whin we got to th' dog-kinnel lodge an' found th' fire out.

"'Ain't it gr-reat!' cries Mike, while we're startin' a fire wanst more. 'Ain't

it gr-reat!' he says. 'This is th' way to live, where ye have somethin' to do to keep th' blood from stagnatin'. Plinty iv fresh air!' he says.

"'Ye c'n have some iv mine if ye need anny more,' I says. 'I got too much.'"

"You must have had quite as hard times out here, I fawncy," interrupted Applegate.

"In th' line iv business," returned Pat, "I'll take what's comin' to me whin I can't help it, but I'll not be afther havin' it called be th' name of spoort. Besides, I'm not th' tinderfoot now that I was thin, although still lukkin' f'r th' easy way an' as little throuble iv anny kind as a man c'n have in this wor-rld."

"Any more, old chap?" asked Applegate.

"Anny more!" exclaimed Pat. "Oho! I've only give ye th' little aggrivations so far. I'll pass over th' mor-rnin', whin me breath froze in chunks while we was startin' th' fire that had gone out ag'in. Th' night befor was summer compared to it. Aven Mike was r-ready to start f'r home, but whin he goes f'r to tiliphone f'r th' wagon to come f'r us th' tiliphone ain't wor-rkin'.

"'What d'ye think iv that?' he says.

"'Gr-reat!' says I, sarcastic. 'We c'n walk,' I says, 'an' there's nawthin' like havin' something to do to keep th' blood from stagnatin'."

"'We got to have th' wagon,' he says. 'With thim r-rabbits an' all th' other truck,' he says, 'we got too much to carry. We'll go out an' luk f'r th' break.'"

"Which we done, me carryin' part iv a wire clothesline f'r to do th' splicin' with, an' we found it where th' line r-run through a threee.

"'Tis easy fixed,' says Mike. 'Shin up there, an' I'll tell ye what to do.'

"'Tis no job f'r me,' says I. 'I'm no tiligraft lineman,' I says. 'Go up ye-ersilf.' An' afther some wor-rds, he done it.

"But 'tis more than wan man's job, f'r th' wire kep' slippin away, an' afther a bit he yells f'r me to come up.

"'F'r why?' I says. 'D'ye think I'm a monkey?'"

"'Ye'll come up here,' he says, cross, 'or ye'll walk tin mile to th' railroad with a ton iv r-rabbits on ye-er back.'

"So I wint up, afther fallin' back a few times an' tearin' some holes in me clo'es f'r th' wind to blow through, th' wind bein' on th' job all th' time.

"Did ye iver wr-rap ye-er arms an' legs around an icicle that had a r-rough bark? Did ye iver thry three climbin' as a winter spoort? There's things that beats it f'r fun. But I wint up. Oho! I wint up. Did ye iver sit on a limb with ye-er fingers shtiff, an' ye-er toes numb, an' ye-er ears achin', an' ye-er nose blue, an' ye-er legs tied in knots to keep ye from fallin'?

"D'ye think, Mike,' I says, 'we c'n git a circus job whin we git back? It do be a shame,' I says, 'to waste this thrainin' f'r a sinsational act.'

"'Gr-rab that wire,' says Mike, 'an' hold it up to me.'

"I done so, an' tell ye now there's nawthin' colder than a cold wire. Did ye iver tackle wan that's frostbit an' has th' divil in it, too? Iv coorse not. An' ye niver want to. It may be what some fellies call spoort, but 'tis not my idee av it."

"What else, old chap?" asked Applegate, as Pat paused.

"That's all," answered Pat, "ixcipt that Mike kicked me in th' jaw accidental whin we was climbin' down. We fixed th' wire, tiliphoned f'r th' wagon, an' wint home."

"But I cawn't see why that should drive you away," objected Applegate.

"'Twas th' combination," explained Pat gravely. "Th' r-rabbits alone was nawthin', an' Mike alone was liss, but th' two iv thim together was throuble. Bein' a weak man, I knew Mike w'u'd have me r-rabbit huntin' ag'in, so I come where th' huntin' is not so har-rd, an' ye don't have to do it at all if ye don't want to."

Applegate eyed Pat doubtfully.

"I fawney you're makin' sport of me," he remarked at last.

"'Tis th' thruth," insisted Pat. "Ask Jim Stutt."

"He come here from Wisconsin," said Stutt.

"An' me main idee is to keep out iv throuble," prompted Pat.

"It seems to be," acquiesced Stutt.

Applegate reflected.

"An Irishman, too, don't you know," he commented, to himself rather than to us. "I cawn't make him out."

Jim Stutt roused himself, knocked the loose ashes from his pipe, took two or three puffs, and made other preparations to join in the conversation.

"No more can anybody else that knows him," he said. "He sure is the star-brand puzzle of this piece of country. I'll tell you about him."

"Now, Jim!" expostulated Pat.

"Pull up!" advised Stutt. "I got the road now." Then he turned again to Applegate and myself. "This here human joke box," he said, "tells you the truth, only he don't tell you all of it. He's jest what he says he is, only he ain't. He never carries a gun; he ducks trouble, and he blarneys the trouble out of other people. I ain't sure he wouldn't fight with his fists, but that ain't the way of fightin' here, and he sure acts like he's got a woman beat in bein' afraid of a gun. He's a joke with the boys, but they like him. He's the most insignificant and entertainin' man hereabouts. Everybody likes him, but they don't take him serious, and it don't look like he took himself serious.

"That's the way we sizes him up when Bill Toby runs away with Jack Cort's girl."

"Elopement?" asked Applegate, his interest increasing at the mention of the girl.

Stutt shook his head.

"Kidnapin'," he explained.

"Bill is nursin' a grudge," Stutt went on, "and he takes this way to get even. There sure ain't no other way that he can hit Cort so hard. Even killin' him wouldn't be so bad as stealin' his daughter, for any man whose daughter was in Bill's hands would give up his life cheerful to git her safe away. It hurts Tom Keeney, too, for Tom is due to splice up with the girl in another month, and Bill has it in for Tom almost as much as for Cort.

"Jest think of the pizenest brute of a man you ever knowed, double the dose of cussedness, figger how you'd feel if your daughter or your sweetheart was in his power, and then you'll have some glimmerin' idee of how Cort and Tom feels. They're plumb crazy, and the rest of us ain't none too calm. If Bill ever gits to one of his mounting hide-outs, nobody can tell what he'll do.

"It's no use goin' over the chase, for that's no part of the story. The whole town turns out in the hope of headin' him off afore he can git to cover, but it's Tim Cassidy and me that hits the hot trail first. We find where he's made his get-away with a buckboard that he probly had planted, and along up in the mountings we come across the outfit, showin' he's took to the timber. Then we find where he cut away from the road, and we leaves our hosses and digs in after him.

"We come out on a road that ain't much used only to reach a forest-ranger lookout station, and we mosey along thataways. We ain't found a trace of Bill in the timber, and we ain't lookin' to find him on the road, but we figger we may find where he crossed it and git a fresh start. That's how it comes we're caught unexpected, for at a sharp turn we hear Bill's voice, addressin' us, afore we really see him.

"If either of you moves,' says Bill, 'Pat makes a quick start for hell.'

"Then, too late, we git the layout. There's Pat, standin' beside the road, tryin' to make himself cross-eyed lookin' at the muzzle of Bill's gun. In a little heap on the ground, coverin' her face with her hands, like she didn't want to see what's goin' to happen, is Lucy Cort. Bill is standin' where he can see any move we make while still coverin' Pat. A little beyond is Pat's team. It's sure awkward. We can't make a move without sendin' Pat to kingdom come, and Pat's so close to Bill that Bill can't turn his gun on us, unless he shoots Pat first, without layin' himself open to a rush."

Stutt paused, and took a few puffs at his pipe.

"Go on; go on, old chap!" urged Ap-

plegate. "You've got me jolly well worked up, don't you know."

"I got to go back a ways first," said Stutt.

"No, no," objected Applegate. "It's a bally shame to leave it like that; you cawn't do it, you know."

"I got to go back," insisted Stutt.

"This is a story about Pat, and you got to see where he comes in." Unheeding protests, he calmly proceeded in his own way: "Pat has been cartin' some supplies up to the ranger's lookout with a buckboard, and he meets up with a searchin' party and hears about Bill on the way back. But he ain't lookin' to meet up with Bill, for the party has jest come over that road. That's where Bill is foxy. He cuts out of one road ahead of the men that's after him, and cuts into another behind 'em. So it's a plumb surprise to Pat when he finds Bill and his gun occupyin' the road.

"Bill seems relieved when he sees it's only Pat, sayin' it makes the job easier."

Pat nodded.

"Nobody iver bothers about me," he explained.

"He tells Pat to git out and turn the hosses up the trail," Stutt went on, "and Pat does so."

"An' why not?" asked Pat. "I'm lukkin' into a hair-thrigger cannon all th' time."

"But he argues with him," said Stutt.

"I can't help me blarney," apologized Pat.

"Argues with Bill Toby!" repeated Stutt, in disgust. "Talks to him like he was a man! Tries to make him see that it's a coward trick to make a woman suffer for what a man done! Asks him to let the girl go!"

"An' I'd have won out," put in Pat, "if ye hadn't intherfered."

"Won out!" snorted Stutt. "You sure got a great tongue, Pat; but Bill Toby never listened to no argument but a gun."

"He listened to wan other," suggested Pat mildly.

"He did," admitted Stutt, "but it was in the same line. I'm comin' to that." Then he resumed the story: "Bill heard

us comin' afore we round the turn, and he's ready for us, like I told you. And there we stand, helpless, with Pat lookin' into Bill's gun, and only ten or twelve feet between 'em.

"Now, then," said Stutt impressively, "here's what that little gun-fearin', peace-lovin', fight-dodgin' cuss done: He looks over our way and says, quiet-like: 'Shoot, Jim! Don't mind me.' And then he says ag'in: 'I don't count in this, Jim. Shoot!' But we don't—we can't—it's too sure death for him, and we like him.

"Bill has an eye on us all the time, and he repeats his threat.

"A move of a finger," he says, 'starts Pat for hell!'

"And the girl, whimperin' on the ground, cries:

"Don't move! He's too brave to die that way.'

"Bill, seein' he has us locoed, plans his get-away.

"We'll be goin' now," he says, 'but, owin' to interruptions, we don't need the buckboard, Pat. The timber is safer. Get up!' he orders the girl, and she struggles to her feet.

"I'll go," she says. 'I'll go peaceful, only don't shoot!'

"You'll go, all right," says Bill, brutal. 'Now,' he tells Pat, 'you back away slow! I don't like you so close. Back over to 'rd Stutt and Cassidy, so's I can have you all covered.'

"But Pat don't stir.

"Back away, or I'll kill you!" threatens Bill, fierce.

"Go ahead!" says Pat, lookin' straight into Bill's eyes. 'It'll be in a good cause I die, for they'll git you afore the smoke clears away.'

"Which is true, and Bill knows it. We're both ready to draw on the flash.

"Shoot!" says Pat, takin' a step forward.

"Bill's eyes grows cruel hard. It's sure up to him, and I'm lookin' for the spurt, but it don't come.

"You got to shoot," says Pat, 'and that's your finish.'

"He comes a step closer. It's the grandest show of nerve I ever see. The girl, watchin', don't seem able to

breathe. I'm ready to make my play the minute the spurt comes or Bill makes a shift, but I don't dare move afore that. Same with Cassidy. It's sure up to Bill hard, for he can't let Pat come within reach, and he can't turn loose without givin' Cassidy and me an openin'.

"Why don't you shoot?" asks Pat.

"He takes one more step, and then—why, chain lightnin' is slow to what comes off then. I can't hardly foller it with my eyes.

"Pat ducks, and dives for Bill's legs. He shoots himself at 'em like he's a batterin'-ram. Bill can't git his gun down quick enough to stop that, but we find later that he nips Pat's heel as he dives under.

"There's nothin' to it after that. Pat gets to Bill's legs, and comes crashin' down on top of him like a house that's tore loose from its foundations. We jump in, of course, and we has Bill all nicely tied up afore he really knows what's happened."

"My word!" ejaculated Applegate enthusiastically. "That was rippin' fine, don't you know! I'm jolly glad to meet the man that did that!" And he ceremoniously shook hands with Pat.

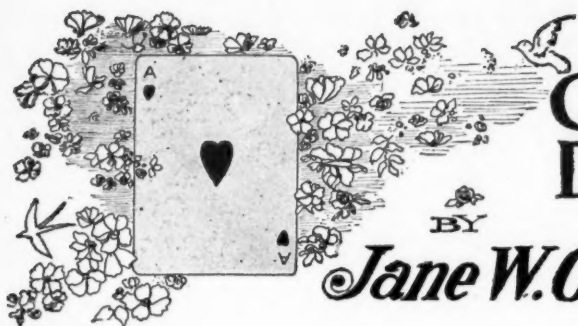
"The cur'ous part of it is," said Stutt, "that he's been the same gun-fearin', peace-lovin', fight-shirkin' joke box ever since that he was afore, but there's three people that would go barefoot over the mountings from here to San Francisco, if need be, to help him. One of 'em is Jack Cort, another is Tom Keeney, and the most important is Mrs. Tom Keeney, which was Lucy Cort. Any time Pat wants a home, it's waitin' for him, and if he'd rather live alone, the Keeneys will move out."

"Most extraordinary!" commented Applegate.

"Tis easy explained," put in Pat. "I'd niver have done it only f'r two things."

"What are they, old chap?" asked Applegate.

"Wan is that Lucy Cort was a woman, an' th' other is that Tom Keeney was me fri'nd. 'Tis a combination that w'd give anny man nerve."



A GOOD DEED

BY

Jane W. Guthrie

WHEN Cynthia Carton, one morning in late September, lounged into her husband's studio, as he was having his toast and coffee, and informed him that she had asked Patricia Wentworth to dine with them that night, he accepted the statement with the indifference of the comfortably married man, merely acknowledging it with an absent-minded "good!" from behind the shield of his morning paper; but when Cynthia added that she had telephoned to Benton Raleigh and asked him to join them, and that he had consented to do so, then Carton laid down his paper and stared at his wife with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Why did you do that?" he asked sharply, perplexedly. "Wasn't there a love affair between those two that ended disastrously once? I seem to recall something of the kind."

Cynthia nodded, as if she were delighted that her husband had caught the significance of her little dinner party, but Carton, observing her elation, remarked rather brutally, as he gazed at her impatiently:

"You're not a fool, Cynthia, but you so often give out the impression that you are by rushing in where angels might well fear to tread that I'm not only graying rapidly, but I'm growing bald, too, from these hair-raising episodes that you insist upon providing for me." He rubbed his hand ruefully over his head. "Any one, it seems to me, would hesitate about blundering into

other people's love affairs—attempting to bring two people together without testing very carefully not only their temperaments, but their tempers; and those two have made opportunity to avoid each other, if one may judge by appearances."

"Ah!" Cynthia settled closer down into the easy-chair beside the table upon which stood her husband's breakfast tray. "That's just what you can't trust—appearances. And that's where I come in." Cynthia's brown eyes were fixed dreamily upon some distant vision of thought as she remarked: "I'm always wanting to try my hand at the game of intrigue and cross-purposes; you've probably noted my aptitude for all games—bridge and the like. I am convinced that once upon a time, in some former period of existence, I lived at courts, and was a most important person, and played the diplomatic game with consummate art." Cynthia smiled benignly, patronizingly upon her husband, her small brown face assuming gradually a most elfish expression as her eyes shone with a mischievous delight. "And I've got to satisfy the craving in the best way I can in these degenerate days. Other people's affairs offer a field, since—she paused dramatically, and sighed fiercely—"since my own are so tamely, so disgracefully domestic."

Carton's eyes gleamed with suppressed amusement, but he assumed a stern expression.

"I told you what was happening to

my hair, and I know that my heart is giving out because of jumping up in my mouth on these occasions when I anticipate having to drag you from the social swamps toward which you will persist in leading me, by way of providing excitement for yourself. If you would just kindly remember me—sometimes."

"You never do have to extricate me from any social swamps, do you? Now, honestly, don't I manage these affairs myself? And"—Cynthia's tones were argumentative as she turned her little dark face toward her husband, lifted her brown eyes piously to heaven—"no one knows how many erring couples I have put in the straight and narrow path of matrimony."

"Nor how many you have driven from it, breathing threatenings and slaughter on your name," muttered Carton, a whisper of laughter in his voice.

Cynthia folded her small hands demurely.

"Surely, Cartie, you must acknowledge that I am a beautiful example upon which to found a precept and a desire to do likewise."

Carton grinned appreciatively at his wife.

"Don't expect me, however, to pour oil on any troubled waters to-night, or diffuse an atmosphere of peace and good will, for I won't do it. If you get into deep water, you must swim out yourself. Neither of those two has ever married, though it's ten years since Raleigh was so devoted that every one supposed that they were engaged."

"That's just it!" Cynthia leaned forward with excitement. "That was Benton Raleigh's little way. Rich, traveled, a man of the world, he had a way of devoting himself to young girls. I suppose he called it giving them a good send-off with his lordly attentions. Those were the days when Raleigh was the most sought-after leader of cotillions, the best whip, a tennis expert, polo, and all that, and now—well, he's plain business man now, but then—ugly as sin—at least I thought so, though he had such decent teeth and

such a smile. I suppose it was the smile that did the business for him."

Cynthia allowed her eyes to dwell with appreciation on her handsome husband.

"And Patty—Patty was only eighteen—too young to know better than to allow the attentions of a man nearly twice her age. I've always thought that perhaps one of the sisters came between them—there was such an everlasting lot of them—or, maybe, her father and mother feared for Pat's young affections, and fancied that Raleigh was just playing with them, and put a stop to it, and she became engaged to Cresson Grant, by parental order, I always suspected, for she held off the marriage for nearly two years, and broke it all off with Grant after the death of both father and mother within a year of each other.

"Raleigh dropped out when Cresson Grant appeared on the scene, and at the time of the breaking off of the engagement was on the other side of the world. When the home was broken up after the death of her father and mother, Pat went to live with an aunt—the one who has travel mania under the guise of health seeking. When I met her on the avenue yesterday, she said that her aunt had taken a house in town for the winter. Miss Pat looked very tall and slender and smart and imposing; graciously reserved and distant, like this."

Cynthia drew her small person up, and smiled formally, a very worldly and sophisticated smile.

"Then I had a vision of how skillfully she might handle Benton Raleigh now, and I thought I'd give her the opportunity to do so, under my friendly guidance. I asked Pat to dinner, and sent for Raleigh. I told him she was coming, but I did not mention to her that I meant to ask him. It hardly seemed worth while."

Cynthia dropped her eyes demurely, but her husband laughed at her, though the expression of dismay had not died out of his face entirely.

"You're playing with edged tools," he warned. "And go on out of my room," he demanded, though his smile

betokened indulgent amusement. "I've got to make some drawings now, and I am most particularly busy. I can't bother with you and your intrigues—your diplomacies, and I wash my hands of you and all of your works."

Cynthia smiled adorably up at her husband standing big and tall over her, then she curled herself up farther in his easy-chair, and, taking up a book, prepared to spend the morning there.

The Cartons were artist folk, and had a charming apartment on one of the side streets leading off from the park end of the avenue, and when Patricia Wentworth met Cynthia, and heard her welcome and the graciously effusive invitation, her heart warmed to her old school friend, and she accepted almost eagerly the invitation given. The Cartons offered a pleasant leading back to old associations which had been broken and disturbed by her travels with her aunt—associations that seemed now to hold out beckoning hands, and ask consideration of her since she had come back to town and felt particularly lonely—out of all of the old life she had known some years back.

Starting to keep her dinner engagement the next evening, she slipped away early lest her aunt question her mode of conveyance, as they were settled down near Washington Square, and Patricia wanted to take one of the motor busses that run up the avenue from Washington Arch. It is a plebeian but satisfying fashion of treating one's self to the atmosphere and sights of the great city, for skimming along, a trifle jerkily, perhaps, high above the moving crowds, in a way not obtainable in less democratic methods of transportation, one is offered a perspective and a foreground that are matchless, especially on a crisp September evening when the city is beginning to sparkle and gleam with her jewels of night. And yet, Patricia could not feel herself in tune with the moving crowds that jostled, and pushed, and hurried along.

The bus had jerked heavily to a stop opposite the library, then a white radiance of perfected form against the golden glory of evening fading out in

the western sky, as dusk folded down. She remembered the rich, colorful years—years dominated by the thought of one man, Benton Raleigh—years that had gone like the day, years of happiness, full of romance, beauty, and sustained charm, and gone now like the light that was dying.

Raleigh had opened for her a gate of dreams—girlish dreams full of rapture—the rapture of one awakened happily from sleep; and then he had left her standing amid her dreams, and walked away because a cloud had risen between them and grown—she knew not how.

Doubtless she would run across him again. This was his home to which she had come, but the years that lay between them had builded an impassable barrier of thought over which she could not see.

Ten years! And it seemed only yesterday that he had ruled her every thought, trained her mind, told her what to read, counseled her how to study and seek the things that made life and its interests to him. Even her schoolgirl language had yielded to his cultivating touch, the spirit with which he had roused her emulation. He had led her up to the heights of mental companionship, and then—dropped her. He had lifted her into a wonderful world of happy association with a man whose social prestige, wealth, old family name, and personal charm made him popular not only with designing mammas, to whom he always turned a cold shoulder, but to men, who seemed to adore him. And this was his world, his city of which he had always seemed so much a part, and which somehow epitomized him for her.

The youngest daughter in a large family, living in a suburban town, Raleigh had taken a fancy to Patricia, and spent many week-ends at her father's home, coming and going with others who made a constant social stir there; and when he was not there he had written Patricia, letters that had seemed to her the most beautiful things that she had ever read—twice a week always these letters had come, and sometimes three times.

She had been an eighteen-year-old girl, learning life through the letters of a man of thirty-five, a man who had lived and thought and hoped and realized many things that she had only visioned in dreams; and when that home had been dismantled and its belongings scattered, she had brought down from the attic, to which she had banished these letters, a small box of them which she had carried with her into exile, the only things left of that romance that had filled her life.

Her cheeks burned now with conscious blushes as she remembered this, and yet—her eyes filled with tears—she pitied that young girl; but she hardened her heart to the thought of the man that girl had known, and she dismissed the very memory of him with a sort of hot fury, a glad congratulation that she had acquired dominion over herself, and killed any silly sentimentality that might lend her a forgiving spirit.

But when the bus stopped at the side street, and Patricia climbed down to hurry through the growing dusk to the Cartons, Benton Raleigh, coming to her through the dusk like a visible presentment of her thought, stood waiting for her at the curb, and held out his hand to help her to the sidewalk. She knew his voice instantly, though she could hardly see him, yet so well had those previous moments of remembrance prepared her to meet him that there was no visible embarrassment in her manner; her eyes were as cool, her voice as steady, as if he had never held more than a casual place in her life.

"I am just going to the Cartons for dinner," she announced, "and I've had the most delightful swing up the avenue in the motor bus."

She was gay and bright and gracious, though exceedingly formal in manner.

"I saw you as the bus stopped opposite the library. I, too, am due at the Cartons."

Ah, the remembered beauty of Raleigh's voice, the rich note of welcome, or feeling, or—what was it?

"Why—Cynthia said nothing of you to me!"

Patricia spoke hastily, almost vexedly, and could have bitten her tongue, a moment afterward, for doing so. She had promised to be so calm in the presence of this man when she should meet him, and here she was betraying herself like a schoolgirl, instead of offering the studied, gentle, sweet indifference she had promised herself.

"No?" Raleigh always used that negative inquiringly, she remembered; it expressed nothing and—everything—if he wished. "But she told me, and I hurried on to give you a greeting before you got there—a greeting that should be all my own, and unshared."

Again the rich note of feeling in Raleigh's voice, and Patricia indignantly resented it. Still, she counseled herself, it were just like him to be so gallantly thoughtful of her, to spare her Cynthia's prying eyes at her meeting with him; she recalled now that Cynthia's eyes had been prying the day before.

"And you?" he asked. "Are you well—are you happy? Has life been good to you? As good as it ought to be?"

To Patricia's sensitive ears Raleigh seemed to be talking as to a little girl, the girl of eighteen he had known. How easily he dropped back—how exactly he used those remembered tones of the voice, the almost caressing manners of that time! Her brows drew down heavily.

"Ah, now," she laughed up at him, as they walked slowly down the side street, "and you are a man who knows his world, and you ask me that? You with your vast, your reputed knowledge of men and women, of human nature! Did any one, man or woman, in the inmost heart, ever acknowledge that life had dealt with them according to their deservings? Has that insatiable ego, which governs us, ever been willing to say: 'I have received according to my merits?'"

"Never!" he asserted positively. "And yet"—he laughed whimsically, a bit sadly—"we get in life just what we ask for, just what we demand. If we have not the things that the insatiable ego craves, whose fault is it? Not

that of some intangible master of evil forces, a crafty Satan ready to hurl misfortune upon us, and only waiting to disarrange our best-laid plans. That's another and a soothing fiction of the insatiable ego, which will never admit that self can be wrong, or lacking in judgment. No, we are our own mischance. Everything is ours, everything in life, everything of which the mind can conceive or our eyes vision, if—ah, that formidable if!—if we know how to take it, have the pluck to stretch forth the hand to opportunity, and opportunity offers not once alone, but again and again; and we are too cowardly to obey instinct. We either fear our fate too much, or our deserts are small."

"You need not elucidate your theories," Patricia's voice, controlled and light though it was, had something of an edge on it. "You have lived them."

"That's just what I have not," denied Raleigh. "For the one thing—the only thing that I craved in life, I feared to stretch forth my hand."

How his voice thrilled and moved Patricia after all these years! There was the same rich quality in it that it had held in those lost years, and his smile—ineffably sweet and winning—the smile of a man who holds to beauty and strength; but again Patricia hardened her heart, her lips set in a thin line, her tall, slender figure seemed to gain in height, and her head was held with a royal, almost indignant, pose; nor did her eyes meet Raleigh's when he held the door of the house open for her.

Not until they had entered the lift to go up to the Cartons' apartment, would she look at the man at her side.

He had not changed in any appreciable way, excepting that his eyes, which used to be so full of life, so eager, were a trifle weary, a bit tired looking, and his hair, which had been brown, had darkened, and was dusted with gray on the edges about the temples. There was about him that same compelling charm of individuality. A thorough cosmopolitan, a citizen of the

world, Patricia said to herself, as she considered him, and—a man. No idle loiterer this about drawing-rooms, but a man, persuasive, charming, homely—there were no two ways about it.

He was above medium height, but his shoulders were a trifle stooped, and his dark skin was muddy, and made his blue-gray eyes look lighter than they were, but his smile—that smile was Raleigh himself. Winning, charming, flashing, it commanded your interest, and then regard.

When Cynthia saw the two come in together her eyes gloomed with disappointment, she almost pouted; but in a flash, she detected, to her satisfaction, that the atmosphere was electric, even threatening, and she began to congratulate herself, to anticipate pleasure.

Patricia was gay and bright and full of anecdote at dinner; and lovely in her thin black gown—a gauzy black gown trimmed with dull-blue embroidery with interwoven sapphires here and there. Sapphires were gleaming in the band which held her hair close to her shapely head in a quaint fashion indescribably becoming. Her dark eyes shone, and her slender, pointed face, with the color coming and going under the rich, olive skin, was full of sparkle and light.

Not once could even the most eager, searching eye find a spot in her armor through which an emotion could be described.

Raleigh, however, was silent, rather moody and quiet, and his eyes hardly left Patricia's face. He seemed to be impatient that any one should speak but Patricia, as if the sound of her voice were all the music that his ears asked.

After dinner, when they were all smoking, he sat with his eyes shaded by his hand, but when, late in the evening, Cynthia drew out the card table, Patricia protested. She must go—she could not stay, her aunt was to send for her at that hour. In truth, Patricia detested bridge—auction bridge.

"You won't care to have me play with you. I am an indifferent, a very cautious bidder."

"Bridge is like marriage, Patty," con-

soled Cynthia. "They coax you into it, and sometimes you're forced to bid away beyond your hand, to make good the partner's hand; and if you can't make your contract, you lose—lose horribly, and everybody grumbles, and throws mental stones at you, and they make you pay—pay, in a thousand ways. But we play, and we—marry."

"Fortunately," said Patricia, "I don't know anything about matrimony."

"Why 'fortunately'?" questioned Raleigh. "Are you so unfortunate in your married friends?"

Patricia turned, and stared critically at Cynthia, and then at her husband, the quietest, gentlest of men.

"Am I?" she asked, and everybody laughed.

But the games were rather tame; there was an undercurrent of feeling that seemed to detract in some subtle way from interest in them, and center it on the personalities, keeping enthusiasm in abeyance. They stopped after the first hand of the third game, on the second rubber played.

At this time, Carton was dealer, and playing with Raleigh. Patricia was the second player, and Cynthia the fourth. On the first round of bidding, Carton, who held eight, four, two of hearts; ace, two of diamonds; ace, queen, four, three of clubs; and ace, king, knave, four of spades, opened with a one no-trump bid.

Patricia, second player, held king, knave, nine, six, three of hearts; queen, eight, seven, five of diamonds; seven, six of clubs; and ten, five of spades, and she raised the bid to two hearts.

Raleigh scanned his cards carefully. He held ace, queen, ten, seven of hearts; king, knave, nine, six of diamonds; ten, five, two of clubs; and three, two of spades. He doubled.

Cynthia, fourth player, holding the five of hearts; ten, four, three of diamonds; king, knave, nine, eight of clubs; and queen, nine, eight, seven, six of spades, said "No."

Both Carton and Patricia refused to bid on the second round, and the lead fell to Raleigh. It was a simple game for him to play out, and, at the end of

it, Patricia found herself and her partner losers by twelve tricks and seven hundred points.

"Never again!" she said to Cynthia, as she rose from the table. "The idea, Cynthia, of two women trying to hold their own against the combined forces of two men!"

"I'm afraid it has been done too often before to cause comment," Raleigh remarked sententiously. "Indeed, I've known one woman overwhelm a host of men. And you were too hasty there in your effort and conclusions."

"Well, we'll leave you men alone after that," laughed Cynthia, "for I'm going to carry Pat off to the kitchen to help me concoct a salad for you."

"Take your husband," suggested Raleigh. "I would like to explain that hand to Miss Wentworth, and show her where she was wrong in her inferences."

"You had good hearts," he said, when they were alone together, "but nothing to back them up. Look!" He spread the cards out on the table. "I could have raised the bid to two no-trumps and made game, but I had a winning hand by doubling your bid, and getting the lead—as I'm taking it now. You see, Patsy"—he leaned over and took her hand in his—"I've always meant to fill out the hand you tried your best to spoil, even if I had to take it away from you and make it all over."

"What do you mean?" she asked, her face paling slightly.

"This," he said. "Don't try to take your hand away. I want to hold it in mine. Once I believed that you would reveal yourself to me. I believed that you would come to me, as you did the first time that I saw you—Do you remember?" Raleigh's voice had a thrill in it, his eyes held Patricia's, her hand was closely folded in both of his. "It was your first cotillion, and you had been left standing alone. I saw your frightened glance about you; I saw you scan the faces of the men moving about, and I was just about to make a jump for you, when you turned to me, and came straight to me, your head held high, your hands outstretched. Oh,

you were such a lovely young thing, the sweetest young girl that I ever saw, with that frightened color coming and going in your cheeks, and your eyes blazing with excitement, and you said: 'I don't know where to go, won't you tell me what I must do?' And I caught you up, and said: 'This,' and the music was throbbing, and the violins singing, and your eyes gleaming as I danced off with you. You dropped into my step instantly, the most perfect step with mine, and I wanted to dance to the end of the world with you. I vowed that you should come again to me, just that way, and ask me what to do with your life, so that I could tell you that it was mine, and always will be."

"You never gave me the opportunity."

Patricia's eyes fell under Raleigh's steady gaze, her voice dropped to a murmur.

"Look up! Look up, Patsy!" How the name thrilled her! It was Raleigh who had first called her that, and she had never allowed any one else to use it. "I never gave you an opportunity?"

"No." Patricia was hugging her resentment closely to her. She could dare now to tell him the torturing truth, the truth that had seared and burned in her all these years. "No—you never did, and—that girl I was used to wonder why. Perhaps she longed to have you say the things that you looked at her. But never by word did you say that you cared for her, and when another man came to her and told her that he cared for her it was balm, and she accepted him."

"You did not marry him."

"I—couldn't." The words came slowly, almost in a whisper. "Oh!" she blazed out. "You were a most consummate master of your art of making women care for you; and I—I had been well warned; but I disregarded it all. I was loyal to you: for two years, and no one else entered my thought. You were my ideal, and—I was so flattered, so delighted, that I, an unformed girl, with older sisters who were much sought should have won your regard. Oh—it is not an unusual story, I find."

"Was there nothing more? Were you only 'flattered,' 'pleased'? Was there nothing else? Tell me."

"I loved you."

Frankly Patricia confessed it, as if the truth surging up were glad of exit.

"And you would not let me know—would not tell me?"

In Raleigh's eyes there dwelt a depth of tenderness that even she had never dreamed of.

"You withheld it from me."

"My letters——" Raleigh's voice pleaded.

"Yes, you wrote to me, and I answered—stiff, little schoolgirl epistles, I suppose."

"The dearest letters that I ever read."

"Don't—don't!" she cried. "It hurts me yet to think of those letters—how I must have revealed the truth to you—how I must have showed you my inmost heart."

"They were so guarded that I never saw your heart," he protested. "They never even hinted that you cared for me; and each one I opened I used to assure myself: 'In this one I shall find her needing me, her hands will be outstretched in this one, asking me what to do.' And I—I would have taken you in my arms, and carried you to the end of time. But you never did. No artful woman of the world could better have guarded her heart. Then you learned to question and distrust me, to drift away from me, and I—always I was hoping that you would reveal yourself to me. It was silly of me, and, as I said this evening, I hesitated, feared—for you. How could I, a man twice your age, hope to gain your love, or know that you would feel the sense of companionship that I felt for you? I had only that first memory of you, scanning every face in the crowd and turning to me with frank confidence."

"I am glad—glad"—Patricia's lips were stiffly set—"that a little girl of eighteen could so carefully guard her heart."

"No, you're not." Raleigh shook his head. "You're desperately ashamed of her."

Patricia's eyes were still cold, her

face averted, but Raleigh held her hand close—close in both of his.

"I could prove my love for you, if I had some witnesses—if I could show them to you."

"What witnesses?"

Patricia whirled about quickly, with an obdurate twist of her shoulders, her chin lifted with cold resentment.

"My letters. Did you put them so completely out of your life once that they turned to dust and ashes?" Raleigh's eyes gleamed, his breath came quickly. "You sent two or three of them back, once, in a joke, and I read them over the other day, and wondered afresh how you could ever have missed the message they carried you, and were meant to carry you. Are they dust and ashes?"

The color flamed up in Patricia's face, her eyes were still averted.

"No," she said, in a low tone.

"Will you promise me to read them over to-night?"

There was a quiver of anxiety in Raleigh's voice which changed to a note of triumph almost, as he noted a subtle change come over Patricia's face. Something sweet and beautiful crept up over it, like an afterglow of the girl's expression she had worn at eighteen, as if memory were offering her a thought that softened her heart. Raleigh drew her other hand closely into his, just as Cynthia and her husband came back into the room.

Dawn was breaking when Patricia laid aside the last letter from that lit-

tle box that had come with her into exile. She rose, and, walking to the window, looked out upon another day, and the light in her eyes was like a sunrise of joy. Her slender, pointed face was turned to the morning, and her lips were swept with a rapturous smile as she murmured: "He loved me! He always did love me!"

She lifted her face to the light growing bolder on the brown branches of the trees of September, in the lovely old square.

"And I—I shall send for him to-day, and ask him to—tell me what to do."

It was late that afternoon when Cynthia Carton poked her small, dark face around the opened door of her husband's studio.

"'How shines a good deed in a naughty world!'" she quoted at him, and then walked boldly in as she announced: "I saw Benton Raleigh and Patricia Wentworth walking in the park this afternoon, making as fast as they could for the secluded north end; and they had their heads close together—so close together that I blushed. It seemed indecent—such a parade of affection as that. I suppose that they think they're in love."

"And I suppose that you think that you, as mistress of intrigue—diplomacy, I beg your pardon—were the means to the hand of Providence for opening their eyes," teased Carton, as Cynthia put her brown little face up close to his, "to whisper something to him," as she said.





THE GREAT ARGENTINA BUBBLE

James Oliver Curwood

IF Hawthorne had not written "The House of the Seven Gables" Hepzibah would not have been Hepzibah. And not being Hepzibah, she would certainly have inherited more of the cross-grained nature of her father. Those who knew the story of her christening ascribed not only her name, but her sweetness of disposition and her beauty, as well, to her mother, who was dead. Hepzibah, at eighteen, was a bewilderingly sweet proof that beauty is sometimes more than skin deep, in spite of some æons of multitudes who have thriven on sour grapes.

Hepzibah's dimples were the prettiest in Ashcroft Court. Her deep blue eyes, that would laugh or cry on the same moment, like a bit of the sea lost between sunlight and shadow, were the loveliest. Her brown hair seemed to shine with the joy that lived in her, even on dark days. And everything went deep. She was pretty to the soul of her, as young Danton said more than once, with the reverence with which one says a prayer.

The fact that she was Hepzibah Morton, and that her father was a millionaire, in no way spoiled her sweetness, or made her less lovable. People wondered how Hepzibah could have such a father, and how such a father could have Hepzibah. And, being the girl she was, as true as she was pretty, and with a good deal of spirit to back it all, it was not surprising that when it came to the matter of love Hepzi-

bah's hand followed faithfully the guidance of her heart, which galloped her over barriers and barriers of inexpressible things as viewed from Papa Morton's eyes. Quite naturally, affairs came to a sharp crisis in Ashcroft Court.

Hepzibah first met Philip Danton in a magazine, where he told a little story that brought tears to her eyes, and made her think of the mother whom she could just remember. He was a newspaper man, twenty-six, not bad-looking, possessed of a tremendous ambition to rise a little above ordinary mortals, and with a brain sharpened by the constant whetting of six years' experience on a metropolitan daily.

Outside of the routine of his daily grind, Danton was a dreamer of a very practical sort. He built himself many castles in the air, and vowed that they would become realities some day. He worked toward them, steadily and irresistibly, and hunted for opportunities with a club in his hand. He hammered out an opening for himself, small at first, in the columns of the magazines, and at the time he met Hepzibah his first novel was in type.

From the minute that Hepzibah's lovely blue eyes first looked into his own, the biggest of all his castles in the air became at least a partial reality; and, six months later almost to a day, it became so completely real that Danton felt like knocking success out of mountains with his naked fists.

For three days after that Hepzibah

and Philip guarded their precious secret. On the fourth his book was printed, and with an autograph copy in his hand as a present for Hepzibah's father, Philip faced the ordeal.

The crash came. It happened in the small, second-floor library of the Morton home, where Hepzibah's father buried himself when the stock market was going wrong. Philip had expected something, but not the cyclonic wrath that fell upon him. It took him off his feet, literally and with precision, for in his excitement Hepzibah's father heaved his autograph copy of "The Winged Meteor" with considerable violence.

"You impudent young cub!" he roared. "Get out of here or I'll murder you!"

There was no chance for argument, and Philip retired. For a quarter of an hour Hepzibah comforted him in a dark corner of the hall below.

"It's all my fault, dear," she whispered sobbingly. "I should have known that this—would be a bad time. Something terrible has happened in the grain market, and I am afraid that papa is a heavy loser in wheat. Oh, it's all my fault, dear—every bit of it!"

"Then there's just one thing for you to do, Heppy, my sweetheart," said Philip, kissing her pretty lips. "And that is to marry me, whether he likes it or not."

Hepzibah drew back, startled.

"Philip!"

With a low laugh, Philip drew her to him again.

"Do you suppose that I can live without you, my darling?" he asked softly, running his fingers through her hair.

"And do you suppose that I *will*?"

"No-o-o-o—"

"Well, then——"

At the sound of a step above them, Hepzibah thrust Philip toward the door.

"I will have it out with him myself," she whispered quickly. "And then I will send you a note—to the office. Hurry, Philip, please, *please* do. There——"

by his watch Danton walked restlessly up and down two or three of the quieter streets near the center of town. His mind was occupied by swift thought, mostly of Morton. That afternoon he had come into what he mentally tabulated as his "first personal touch" with Hepzibah's father. Morton had spoken to him two or three times, he had shaken hands with him when Hepzibah gave them a timid introduction, and that was about as far as their intimacy had gone. He knew that Hepzibah loved her father devotedly, in spite of the fact that she feared him a little in some ways; and Hepzibah's aunt, who was sweet enough to be Hepzibah's mother, had told him that Morton worshipped the very ground his daughter walked upon.

Taking these things into consideration, he waited more and more impatiently for Hepzibah's note. Twice he went to the office, but there was nothing for him. Just as he was about to leave his desk for the third time, to get some supper, a messenger came strolling in and gave him a little ivory-white envelope that bore with it a faint breath of heliotrope. With trembling fingers he tore it open and read what Hepzibah had written him:

MY DEAREST PHILIP: I have had a long talk with papa, and he is obdurate. He is not such a terrible lion, dear, when I am sitting on his knee, and making faces at him. But he almost threw me off this afternoon. He says that I shall not marry before I am twenty, at the very least, and that when I *do* marry it must be some one who can *take care of me properly*. Think of *that*, dear! Just as though you couldn't! He says that he is sorry he acted so shamefully to you, and that he will apologize the first time he meets you.

And now, dear, I must tell you some terrible news, and perhaps you will understand better why I must stick close to father just now. He needs me, I guess, more than ever before. He is facing ruin. He almost cried when he told me, and when I saw the beginning of tears in his eyes I loved him more than ever before. He says that he has ten million bushels of May wheat, and that it has declined eight cents a bushel on account of the big crop in Argentina. He can hold on only a little longer, and if something does not happen he says we will not live much longer in Ashcroft Court.

Dear boy, you understand now, don't you?

For just an hour and three-quarters

I must stick to papa now, and make up a little, if I can, for all that he is losing. He needs me, doesn't he? He needs me—more than you do. And a little later, when everything comes out right, you may have me forever and ever. I promise you that.

To-morrow auntie and I are going to take luncheon at Fenno's. Will you be there, about twelve? We three will talk it all over then. Lovingly,
HEPZIBAH.

There were tears in Danton's eyes when he finished. Never in his life had he loved Hepzibah as he loved her that minute. He wanted to go to her, and tell her that she was an angel. He wanted to grip crabbed old Morton by the hand, and offer him the loan of three thousand dollars which it had taken him six years to save. Instead of acting on his desires, he pocketed Hepzibah's note, lighted a cigar to hide the emotion in his face, and went into Blakeslee's room.

Blakeslee was a Sunday-special man, and Danton's closest friend. He was at his desk, clouded in tobacco smoke, and thumping away at his typewriter with enthusiasm when Philip entered.

"I'm 'off' to-night, Blake," he greeted. "Going to find time for a game of billiards?"

"Can't do it," said Blakeslee, straightening himself and blowing a hole through the smoke about him. "Got the best dope of the year right here, Phil, and I want to finish it while the spirit moves. Mighty good idea for a magazine, if you want to use it."

"What is it?"

"Story of Belize, president of Argentina," replied Blakeslee, reloading his pipe. "Biggest rascal that ever held down a presidential cushion, and the most likable cuss I've run up against in a year. He's on his last legs, politically and financially. Has two months longer to serve, and hasn't the ghost of a chance for reelection. How he got there in the first place is a mystery. Revolutionist, soldier of fortune, and good all-round sport in his time. Makes hot stuff when your Uncle William gets his hand into it!"

"I wish Argentina and President Belize were in Hades," exclaimed Danton, turning toward the door.

"Don't get huffy," called out Blakeslee after him. "Argentina means just forty dollars to me to-night because it's space. We'll have that game to-morrow."

Out in the hall that led to the main office, Danton ran up against McCartney, who wrote and edited three-quarters of the morning market page. McCartney had been glum for a week. He was glum to-night.

"How's wheat, Mac?" asked Philip. "Tumbling," answered the other laconically. "It wiped me out of my margins to-day. Had two hundred on May. Confound the Argentina Republic! I wish it was in——"

"So do I," interrupted Philip.

McCartney looked interested.

"Have any wheat?"

"No, but I've got friends who have. See here, Mac, tell me just how it is that this confounded bit of South American landscape is shoveling wheat down so. Any real reason for it?"

"Simple enough," said McCartney. "Wheat is like quicksilver, Phil—easily moved. If there's a frost somewhere over in Russia, the bulls grab hold of the fact, and swear that we're going to have a bread famine, and wheat goes up. If there's a heavy dew down in Oklahoma, the bears come to the bat, and say we're going to have so much wheat that we'll be burning it for fuel inside of a year, and wheat goes down. Then the sun shines in South Dakota, and the bulls have another inning, swearing by the ghosts of all their grandmothers that the wheat crop is burned up. That's the way it's worked. Just now it's Argentina. There are only four million people down there who eat bread, and they've got two hundred and fifty million bushels of wheat 'in sight.' That means about two hundred millions for export, and 'There's Going to be Cheap Bread for Evermore,' is the song of the bears just at present. Understand?"

"Thanks," said Danton. "And who's getting hit the hardest over here?"

"The little fellows, of course," said McCartney. "It's the little fellows, always and forever. Try the market

once or twice, Phil. You'll see how they get you. Nine out of ten of the small fry are short on December and May options at this minute. S'long!"

For at least five minutes Danton stood without moving. Then, with a low exclamation, he hurried back to Blakeslee.

"Will it bother you if I read over your stuff on Belize?" he asked.

"Not at all," replied Blakeslee. "There's a bunch of it from the scraparium and the library. Help yourself."

For an hour Danton buried himself in the story of Belize. He smoked incessantly. His cheeks became flushed with a growing excitement. He made innumerable notes, and when he was through he left the room so quietly that Blakeslee did not see him go. He went down on the street, boarded a car, and thirty minutes later got off at Ashcroft Court. In front of the big brownstone Morton home he paused for a moment, and wrote a few words on one of his cards. Then he ran up the steps, rang the doorbell, and handed his card to the butler. Two minutes later that individual reappeared, and said:

"Mr. Morton will see you in the library."

Hepzibah's father was waiting for him when he entered. His stern face had relaxed a little, and, without rising from his chair, he said:

"Sit down, Danton. I've wanted to see you, to apologize for my gruffness this afternoon. Didn't act quite like a gentleman. Should not have thrown the book. You say on this card that you've got some big news on wheat?"

Philip came quickly and calmly to the point of his interview.

"Not so much news, as a proposition," he said. "Mr. Morton, what will it be worth to you if I send wheat up eight or ten cents a bushel during the next three weeks?"

For the space of at least a dozen seconds, Morton stared at his caller as if he had gone mad. Then his face slowly wrinkled itself into a smile, and

in another moment he burst into a laugh.

"If you send it up!" he exclaimed. "Good Lord!"

"It's a simple question to answer, isn't it, Mr. Morton?" said Philip coolly. "How much would it be worth to you?"

"About a million," said Hepzibah's father.

"Then here is the proposition," continued Philip. "It will cost you nothing—not a cent—to try the experiment. If I put up wheat from five to ten cents a bushel within the next three weeks will you pay me two hundred thousand dollars, and let Hepzibah be my wife?"

Morton's florid face became redder. For a moment it seemed about to burst.

"Wha-a-a-t!" he gasped.

"That is the proposition," said Philip, even more calmly. "Just at present I am in possession of a scheme by which I can boom wheat. Will you pay the price?"

Morton rose to his feet, and at first Philip thought that he contemplated assault. But Morton saw something in the other's face that puzzled him. He knew, in spite of his prejudices, that Danton was one of the cleverest men on the *Star*, and he walked back and forth for several moments, with his hands thrust deep in his pockets. Suddenly he stopped, and turned sharply upon the young man.

"If you're big enough to boom wheat, you're big enough to be Hepzibah's husband," he said. "Yes, I'll pay the price. Now, what's your scheme?"

"That must remain a secret with me," replied Philip. "All that you are to do is to stand ready to sell your wheat when it goes up. Have you pen and ink? I can do nothing unless the agreement is in writing, with your signature under it."

Morton pointed to a small desk at one side of the room, and Philip sat down to write out the necessary form. When he had gone, Hepzibah's father scrawled his signature under it, grunting in audible disgust as he did so.

"No fool like an old fool," he

growled. "But it's the easiest way to get rid of you, I guess. You won't have the nerve to show up around here after this. Good evening!"

"Good evening," said Philip affably. "You won't see me again for some time, Mr. Morton. But *watch wheat!*"

He went out as he spoke, descended the front steps three at a jump, and made a race for a car that was stopping at the next corner. It was nine o'clock when he returned to the *Star* office. After a brief interview with the managing editor, he sat down at his typewriter, and wrote a three-page, single-space letter to Hepzibah. He found Blakeslee still at work when he entered the Sunday man's room.

"I've come to say good-by, Blake. I'm leaving."

Blakeslee looked up with a serious face. He knew what that announcement usually meant.

"Oh, I'm not fired," added Philip quickly. "It's that Belize article of yours. Got me rather interested. Must be big opportunities down in Argentina, and I'm going. That article says—"

Blakeslee rose slowly to his feet, and approached Danton, looking at him as one might examine a curious biological specimen under a microscope.

"Do you mean this, Phil?"

"Yes."

Blakeslee looked about him cautiously, and thumped the bowl of his pipe in the palm of his hand.

"See here, Phil," he said in a whisper. "Your Uncle William is getting ten dollars a column for that stuff, and I wouldn't swear by everything that's in it. Understand? Ten dollars per, and half rate for pictures. To be honest, I've stretched the stuffin' out of every fact I have."

"And Belize?"

"Ah, there you have it, pure gold and four feet to the yard. Belize is the exception. He is a hummer, and I haven't been able to do him justice. You're sure going?"

"In the morning—at ten-thirty—on a steamer bound for Buenos Aires. And there's a prodigious favor that I want

you to do me, Blake. You helped Warner to the governorship, and you're chummy. He's at home to-night, and I want you to drop that Belize stuff for an hour or so, and get me the warmest letter of introduction that he ever handed out. I can get the mayor and two bank presidents, but the governor is the real stuff. He is absolutely necessary to my success down in Argentina. Will you do it?"

Blakeslee turned to put on his hat and coat.

"I'll have it here by midnight. And you—"

"I'm going over to the club to find the mayor, and then I'll rouse Hutchins and Hapsgood out of their feathers. Good luck to you, Blake—and make it strong!"

At nine-thirty the next morning, Danton drew three thousand dollars in cash from his bank. At ten-forty-five the Buenos Aires steamer was carrying him slowly out of the harbor. He had sent his letter to Hepzibah by special delivery. In his breast pocket he carried four official-looking documents, which were letters of introduction from the governor, the mayor, and two bank presidents. He was dressed in his "best," and carried a lively-looking little bamboo cane. He was American, typical and irresistible. His heart was fairly bubbling over with joy and hope, and as the city drifted behind him he looked away off to where Ashcroft Court ought to be, and said to himself:

"Now—watch—wheat!"

The second day out Philip observed a slim, dark-faced, jaunty-looking young man promenading the deck, who bore about him an air of magnificent superiority to the ordinary human beings who had been fortunate enough to take passage with him. He wore a tiny black mustache, waxed and pointed sharply; his dress was immaculate, and he seemed always to look above everything about him, in spite of the fact that he was not very tall. He interested Philip, who went straight across to him one morning, and hit up an acquaintance. The card which the stranger

handed to him in return for his own bore the following inscription:

ANTONE DESQUI,
Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Buenos Aires, A. R.

Without a word, after he had read the card, Philip dove into his inside pocket, and produced the letter written by the governor of the great and glorious State from which he hailed. Antone read, and the chill of his face grew less. At the end he smiled like one to whom had come a great and sudden happiness, thrust out both hands, one of which Philip shook, and the two became friends.

There was something immediately likable about the exclusive young secretary, and Philip put him down as a "blood" without second thought. He had been on a short business trip to the States, and was going back to resume the duties of his office. He was bursting with enthusiasm over his own country, and when he found that Philip, according to the governor's letter, was "an investigator looking into Argentina in the interests of American capital," he proved himself an inexhaustible fountain of information, which ranged from the cost of burial caskets to the price of porterhouse steak and broiled lobster in the palm plaza.

"You Americans are just beginning to wake up," he said on the fourth day. "You've been so lost in the bigness of your own country that not one out of a hundred of you has ever taken a look at Argentina, even on the map. Do you know that we're just about a thousand miles longer north and south than you are, and that three-quarters of our country is made up of the richest and most productive plains in the world? It's a fact. We own just about two dollars to your one per capita. Last year our foreign trade ran up to seven hundred million dollars, nearly five times that of Mexico, Cuba, or Chile—and England got away with most of that. Talk about Paris, Berlin, Vienna—and Washington! Wait until you see Buenos Aires, which is just about twice as big as your Boston, and as beautiful as all the other cities put

together. When I was in Washington a lady asked me if we had street cars and electric lights. Think of it!"

Without undue haste, Philip led up to Belize. Antone Desqui's little black mustache bristled when the president's name was first mentioned.

"He isn't big enough," he exclaimed. "I'm 'opposition'—we're all 'opposition,' or I wouldn't dare say this. But it's the truth. We've got splendid cabinet men, but Belize is a millstone. He'll disappear like a bubble in the wind at the next elections."

"And yet I have got to see him," mused Philip, as though the thought was anything but a pleasant one. "It is absolutely necessary. I wonder if I could trouble you to give me an introduction when we arrive?"

"To be sure," said Desqui. "It can be very easily arranged. We arrive on Sunday. I can secure you an audience the next day if you wish."

"Fine!" cried Philip. "Let's go have a smoke."

The following ten days were filled with an acute anxiety for Philip. He would have given a hundred dollars for a three-word wireless from New York—a single quotation on May wheat. If the decline had continued steadily, Morton would be wiped out, and his experiment would be useless. But he hoped that the gods of luck would favor him. If there were declines, followed by reactions of any strength at all, Morton would hang on.

Antone Desqui was just eighteen hours off in his prediction of their arrival in Buenos Aires. The steamer came into port early on Monday morning, and at eleven o'clock Antone and Philip were driven in a carriage to the Capitol Hotel, near the government building. Inside of five minutes after they landed, Philip had a typically American newspaper in his hands, and hunted out the markets. He could not restrain a cry of joy when he saw that wheat had lost only a cent and a fraction since he had sailed. Desqui looked at him curiously as he devoured the half column of reading matter under the quotations, on their way to the

hotel. The news was not reassuring. It was stated that a bull pool had held wheat up, in the hope of regaining some of its losses, but the bottom could not stand the strain much longer. The news of the next two or three days from Argentina was expected to bring about the final smash. Philip felt himself breaking into a cold sweat.

"I must see the president to-day," he said. "Can't you arrange it? If you cannot, I'll have to butt in, and trust to my credentials."

The secretary to the minister of foreign affairs shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course, it can be done," he said. "But isn't it a trifle sudden? Now—to-morrow——"

"It must be to-day," persisted Philip. "I wish that I were at liberty to disclose to you the reason for my haste, but I cannot. I must not lose an hour."

"Then you shall see him this afternoon," replied Desqui, with confidence. "I will call for you at the Capitol at two o'clock. I do not believe that we can arrange to see him before that."

Philip gripped the Argentinian's hand, and shook it until the other winced.

"You're a brick!" he cried. "If I lived a thousand years, I couldn't thank you enough! And remember this—that if you ever want any one to help you fight against odds, just cable over to yours truly. I'll be on deck if I have to borrow an airship to get across!"

Danton took his luncheon alone at the Capitol. In leaving him, the young secretary dropped the remark that he would not find himself lonely, as two-thirds of the population of Buenos Aires were English speaking.

In the huge dining room, filled with the soft music of a stringed orchestra, and the cool murmur of a fountain that sent its multicolored spray dancing above a bank of glistening palms, Philip soon found that Desqui's information was to be taken literally. He heard English, and *not* American. Behind him were three men who were discussing with restrained elation a concession for something or other just secured by their company somewhere up the Rio

Parana. At the table immediately ahead of him was an aristocratic-looking young woman with a wonderfully sweet voice entertaining two male companions with a description of Montreal.

There was the buzz of English in the scented air, low and repressed at all times, only partly intelligible to Philip's American ears. The men were English, and the women were English. He saw them laugh, and their laughter did not rise above the music and the murmur of the fountain. Men conversed with animated gestures, and yet their words did not pass beyond themselves. There was something irresistibly soothing in his environment, and he could not help from comparing it with the brash merriment and loud talk of a fashionable lobster palace on Broadway.

Desqui's words recurred to him with a new significance. The English were in possession of Argentina, commercially, politically, and socially.

It occurred to him that he would like to bring his beautiful Hepzibah here amid this sort of environment. And then he grew flushed with the thought that he *would* bring her. He had made a discovery, and he would act upon it. After his business with Belize, he would look about him, and see what the opportunities were for a hustling young American.

Not until most of the others had finished their leisurely luncheons did Philip leave his table. He was astonished to find that it was a quarter of two. The secretary to the minister of foreign affairs was on time to the minute.

"The president will see you at half-past," he said. "We couldn't have struck him at a more opportune time. He is particularly impressed by the letter from your governor, and I am mistaken if he does not show you unusual courtesy."

There was a significant tone in the young secretary's voice, which Philip did not fail to perceive.

"Belize is always interested in those who are *financially* interested in this country," he added, and without fur-

ther explanation led the way to a carriage outside.

"And those who are financially interested," resumed Philip, as they drove away, "seem to be the English."

"Almost entirely," replied the secretary. And then suddenly he bent forward, and looked seriously into Philip's eyes. "It may be that you are like most Americans, and don't understand the situation down here," he went on. "Possibly you ought to know before you see Belize. You know there isn't much sympathy lost between the Latin republics and your country. And there's a reason for it. Our people have got a pretty poor opinion of your people. Most of us don't think that you've got much backbone or hustle. We're as big as all of your States east of the Mississippi, together with Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri to the westward, and yet you make a greater effort to get the trade of Cuba than you do to get that of Argentina. Do you know that you people *buy* about seventy-four million dollars more than you sell down here? It's a fact. We've got only a few Americans interested, and they're in the meat industry. And the trade trickery of your competitors is adding to the general impression every day. You're slow. Even the Spaniards are beating you out. Buenos Aires alone has got a million and a half of inhabitants, and ought to turn you over two hundred million dollars a year."

"It does seem as though we've been a lot of blunderers," said Philip. "But we're going to begin working Argentina for all there is in her without any further loss of time."

If the young secretary observed the momentary twitching about the corners of Philip's mouth, he at least did not understand its reason.

Philip was completely taken aback in Belize. They found him in his luxuriously appointed quarters at the Capitol, quietly smoking a thin, black cigar. From the picture in Blakeslee's possession, Philip had anticipated a tall, fierce-looking man, with the eyes and hair of a bandit, and a general, all-round "soldier-of-fortune" look.

Belize was a little man, so little that he was almost lost in the great upholstered chair in which he sat. His eyes were black and gleaming; the only fierce thing about him was his mustache, in the growth of which, it seemed, there must have been consumed a great deal of deflected energy that should have gone into his body. Both hair and mustache were almost white.

For a moment after they had been admitted, Belize gazed at his visitors, taking a careful measurement of Philip through his cigar smoke. Then he came to his feet with the sudden agility of a cricket, and at the secretary's introduction shook hands with Danton as warmly as though he were welcoming a guest into his own home.

Desqui hovered about for a few minutes, and then took his leave. The president went briskly to a big mahogany table on which lay Philip's credentials, motioned his visitor to a seat opposite him, shoved across a box of the long, black cigars, and rubbed his hands with a curious frictional sound which, from his infancy, had always had the effect of sending chills up and down Philip's spine.

"I'm very glad to know you, Mr. Danton," he said, as briskly as he moved. "I've read these papers twice—three times. Glad to know your governor and your people are interested in us. Wonderful opportunities! What do you think of Buenos Aires?"

"Magnificent—what I've seen of it," replied Philip.

He was a little excited. His pulse beat faster than usual. He saw in the questing black eyes of Belize, in the movement of his hands, and in the nervous energy of his little body, many signs which pointed to the success of his scheme. By profession and education he was a reader of character, and he felt at home with Belize. He had come into personal touch with a thousand such men in his time, and he was skilled in their ways.

For a quarter of an hour the two men talked, and smoked their cigars. They discussed the English and foreign trade, and Philip let no opportunity slip

to give the impression that he was a representative of a very large sum of money, which was true.

Belize was shrewd, and saw that his visitor was arriving at something. He offered the cigars again, and with a suggestive shrug of his shoulders remarked that his successor would not be as friendly to the Americans as he would have been if the Americans had given him the opportunity. It was the final touch on the trigger, and, banking his whole on a single plunge, Philip leaned over the table.

"I bring you that opportunity, Mr. President," he said in a low voice. "It comes late, but not too late. The capital which I represent must have a little work done down here within the next twenty-four hours, or even less. Say the next twelve—between now and morning. We need a man in high position to assist us. It means a hundred thousand dollars to the one who accomplishes the work—if it is done in time."

The president gave an audible gasp. He laid his cigar on the table, and his black eyes shone. Philip paid no attention to the effect his words had produced, but drew from his pocket the signed agreement of Hepzibah's father, and gave it to Belize.

"You undoubtedly know who Henry Morton is," he said, with a tremendous assurance. "If you don't happen to, you can look him up financially inside of half an hour. He's one of the biggest grain men in the States. You will have a check for a hundred thousand within a week after the work is accomplished. I have with me three thousand dollars in cash, which I am ready to hand over as a sort of pledge. And, of course, no one but those directly interested will ever know why the thing happened."

"A hundred thousand," said the president softly. "But—it is impossible! How could I, even with a hundred thousand, raise the price of wheat—like this?"

"Very easily," smiled Philip, puffing out a big cloud of smoke. "And it won't cost you a cent—at least, not

more than the three thousand I've got. The hundred thousand will be clear, and you can give up your office to your successor with the knowledge that you have done something for your friends, the Americans. You see, it's like this. All the big fellows over there are driving grain down, and it's ruining hundreds of thousands of the smaller fellows, who are the backbone of a country, as you know. If we can boom wheat, it will be a blessing to the whole of the United States."

"But it is impossible," repeated the president incredulously.

Philip laid aside his cigar. The crucial moment had arrived. For five minutes he talked uninterruptedly, while the president's eyes grew blacker and blacker, and his body more and more tense. Understanding lighted up his countenance.

When Philip had done, he rose to his feet, and walked swiftly back and forth over the velvet carpet on the floor. His hands rasped. He looked over the credentials again. Then, with a sudden thought, he turned to a bookcase, and dug out an old Bradstreet. It rated Morton at three million, before he had lost a half of that in copper mines.

"Yes, it would surely be a benefit to your country," he said, returning to the table. "But the idea would be preposterous—here. My own people would not take me seriously."

"You are the president, and they *must* take you seriously," replied Philip. "No matter how preposterous your act may seem here, it will send an electric thrill through the markets of the whole world. To-morrow morning your newspapers will be blazing forth with the news. The cables will be hot with it. Wheat will go up like a bubble—"

"And then it will burst like a bubble," interrupted the president.

"Sure!" said Philip coolly. "That's what we're sending up—a bubble, an Argentina bubble, and all bubbles have to burst sooner or later. But it'll stay up long enough to give my poor, hoodwinked nation time to get out of wheat. Of course your government won't fol-

low your advice, so it can't hurt Argentina. It's a good Samaritan job all round, with a hundred thousand cash just to show our appreciation of a kindness. You surely have got two or three good men through whose hands you can direct the matter."

"Yes," said Belize, "I have several courageous adherents who will support me loyally in any good move, despite the oceans of calumny that have been turned against me."

"Good!" exclaimed Philip, producing the leather wallet in which he carried his small fortune of three thousand dollars. "There will, of course, be a few necessary expenses, and I'll leave a couple of thousand to cover those. I won't take up any more of your time, for the newspapers ought to be getting wind of the affair as soon as possible. The Associated Press must cable it tonight for the morning editions in the United States, and if we can get the news abroad in time to knock a couple of cents off the next Liverpool grain openings, it just about cinches the hundred thousand."

Just eighteen hours later, or nine o'clock Tuesday morning, Henry Morton sat in his big upholstered chair in the second-floor library of his home in Ashcroft Court. One foot was bandaged to the size of a small pillow, and rested on a pile of cushions. For the greater part of a week he had suffered from an attack of the gout. This morning there were puffy bags under his eyes, and deep lines in his haggard face. He had aged five years since the day he had driven Danton from this little room, and it seemed as though nature was no longer capable of sending the red floods of anger into his flabby cheeks, or strength into his limbs.

Morton, like *Faust*, had traveled his pace; he had played to the swift music of the ticker for a quarter of a century, with his head high enough above water to keep him from smothering, but on this day the *Mephistophiles* of the market was to call upon him for the price of the game. He was facing the last hours of ruin. The bulldog

in him had conquered reason. He had hung on until his last dollar was in the balance, and he almost sobbed as he felt Hepzibah's warm little hand against his cheek, and heard her breathing quickly, with little choking sounds which she tried to stifle, as she made her pathetic efforts to comfort him.

They were waiting for the telephone on the table to ring. Morton had already made up his mind that the opening would wipe him out. Fifty times during the past two weeks, Hepzibah had read Philip's long letter, in which to her alone he had fully explained his scheme. She had not lost faith—until now, and she could no longer find words to accompany the gentle sympathy of her hand.

Tinga-ling-a-lingggggggg!

The telephone rang so sharply that it startled them. With a little cry, Hepzibah ran to the table, and put the receiver to her ear. Morton turned, and his face became like wax.

"Yes—yes, this is Miss Morton," said Hepzibah. "I am talking for father."

She stopped. For a few moments swift, guttural sounds came through the phone, and reached Morton's ears. Suddenly the girl quivered. Her fingers crushed a handful of papers, an audible sob broke from her lips, and with a groan Morton buried his head in his hands. The guttural voice continued. Would it never end? Was there some grim sort of pleasure in thus prolonging the announcement of a man's ruin?

"Yes—yes—yes—I will—I will—"

It was Hepzibah's voice, breaking with excitement. Morton lifted his head, and, replacing the receiver, Hepzibah sprang in front of him. A feverish flush had replaced the pallor in her cheeks. Her lovely blue eyes were afire with excitement, triumph, joy.

"It's Philip!" she cried, clutching her hands at her breast. "Oh, I knew he would do it, father—I knew it! Peters says that wheat has opened up a cent and a quarter this morning, and that the shorts are running to cover because of news from Argentina. There

is a rumor that the president has asked his government to place an export duty of twenty cents a bushel on wheat. He says that the crop is not a half of the estimate, and that, as the cost of living in Argentina is already twice what it is in this country and England, the grain should be kept in the country. It is Philip! Read that, father. He told me what he was going to do before he left!"

From her dress she drew Philip's letter, and gave it to her father. With it in his hand, Morton made a painful effort to reach the telephone.

"I must sell!" he gasped. "I must save what I can."

"You shall *not* sell!" cried Hepzibah excitedly, placing herself between him and the telephone. "Read that—first!"

Like one dazed, Morton obeyed his daughter. There was everything in that letter: Philip's great love for Hepzibah, his scheme, his confidence; and Morton's hands trembled as he read. He had scarcely finished when the telephone rang again. Hepzibah was at the table in an instant. A moment later she turned with a little scream.

"It is true! The rumor is verified! He wants to talk with you."

With the tears streaming down her pretty face, Hepzibah gave her father the phone.

The oldest traders in the pit could remember few more exciting days than the one that followed the early cable from Argentina. Succeeding news verified the first. Belize had actually proposed an export duty on wheat.

The chief points of his arguments spread like wildfire. The grain crop in Argentina was overestimated, either through ignorance or for speculative reasons. It cost twice as much to live

in Buenos Aires as it did in New York or London; bread was even higher in the big grain-raising districts. A duty on the export of wheat would lower the cost of living in Argentina. It was necessary. Thus came the reports.

Traders who were short began taking their profits, placing their orders to "buy in" at a quarter and three-eighths advance of the market. The retreat of the shorts, orderly at first, became a rout after the second hour's trading. The bulls rose en masse. By half-past eleven, May options had bulged seven cents a bushel—from 88 to 95. The fact that the market had experienced a decline of twenty-four points, and that nine out of ten shorts could get out at a profit even on the bulge, added to the landslide. At noon Morton gave his broker instructions to close out his options from 98 cents up. He was out of the market the following day, at the average of 99.

That same day, in the room upstairs, a cablegram was brought to Morton. He opened it, with Hepzibah leaning over his shoulders, hugging him so tightly about the neck that he was almost choking. It contained just thirteen words, for ever after the lucky number in Hepzibah's life.

Have I done it? If so, wire hundred thousand immediately to pay costs.

PHILIP.

The next morning a reply reached Philip at the Capitol Hotel, Buenos Aires. It read:

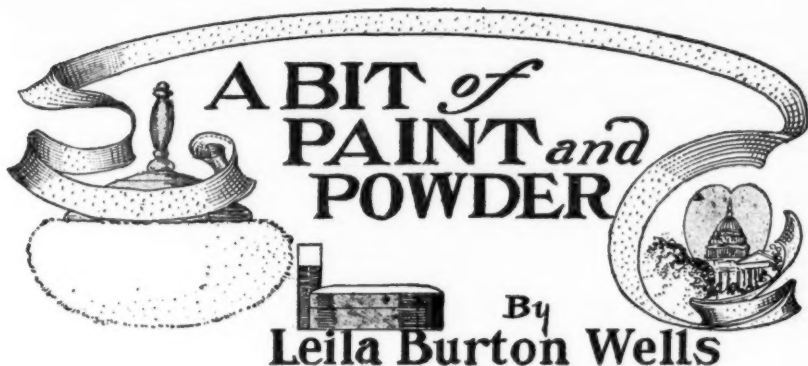
You have. Money coming. MORTON.

And after these were the following thirteen words:

Papa says it may happen on Christmas Day. Hurry home, my precious boy.

HEPZIBAH.





A BIT of PAINT and POWDER

By
Leila Burton Wells

I KNOW it's a disappointment to you," the girl said, casting a furtive, half-appealing glance at her aunt's downcast face. "You see, it comes with a shock of surprise to other people—people who knew mamma, I mean; they expect so much," with a weary sigh. "I don't know why, I am sure; beauty isn't always handed down as a legacy, and a daughter doesn't *always* follow in a mother's footsteps."

"Not always," said Mrs. Lorraine, smiling, "but——"

"But—a daughter isn't always such a hopelessly ugly duckling," finished the girl impetuously; "that is what you were going to say. Oh, don't shake your head, auntie; I *know* it!"

She went over, and, dropping on the window seat at the older woman's side, let her head fall into her hands thoughtfully.

"I don't mind so much now," she reflected, with a resigned shake of her head. "You see, it's an old story to me; but at first! Why, even as a child, they *expected* me to grow up a beauty. Poor daddy scrimped and saved to give me every advantage—and at boarding school I just *lived* on mamma's reputation!"

Mrs. Lorraine smiled again, this time sympathetically, and laid a hand on the girl's dejected head, thinking involuntarily as she did so how white it looked against the red hair.

"Beauty isn't everything," she said in a conciliatory tone that meant: "But you might as well be dead as not have it."

The girl gave her shoulders a despondent shrug, and said pathetically:

"It's almost everything to a girl; she can't be anything without it. If she goes to a dance, she props the walls, and decorated walls *may* be a pretty background, but they are hard to hold up. I *know*, for I've tried them! Oh, you can smile, but there isn't a girl in the world who doesn't want attention, and admiration, and candy, and flowers, and——"

"And everything else?"

"Everything that goes with beauty," seriously. "Now, listen, Aunt Kate!" turning around and resting her round, young arms on her aunt's knees. "You know every girl in the world—I mean every one you hear or read about—has an adventure when they—I mean she—takes a trip across the continent. You know some one asks to put the window down—or lends them—her—a book or something! Well, what kind of an adventure do you suppose I had?"

"I couldn't guess."

"I don't wonder. I wouldn't tell this only I want to show you what it means to be plain. It makes me wild every time I think of it. Of course there was a man; there always is one! If you are pretty, they notice you. If you are plain, you notice them! This man was

a great, big, magnificent thing, with broad shoulders and a push-the-world-aside sort of a manner. He was a gentleman, or I wouldn't have noticed him, and I thought he was English. We came all the way from St. Louis in a Pullman alone, and, after one glance at my face, he never looked at me! I was simply a piece of necessary furniture, ugly and very much in the way, no doubt."

"But, my dear——"

"Wait!" The girl put out a restraining hand. "You haven't heard the worst. I wouldn't have minded a little thing like that. I would hardly have noticed it. But the climax was—— Well—— Oh, auntie, I am ashamed to tell you!"

"Don't be absurd!" curiously.

"Well, the train stopped at a station toward evening, and I was sitting at my window. It was open—I couldn't stand it down in the heat—and I amused myself watching the people trotting up and down the platform. Pretty soon I heard a man's voice say: 'Have a decent sort of a trip?' and another's reply: 'No, beastly. Hot as blazes, and nothing to look at but a red-headed girl, who would have made the old man himself turn the other way.' Auntie, I can *feel* my cheeks burn even now. I saw him plainly as he sauntered off, laughing, and I could have killed him! Not that it was his fault," with a magnanimous curl of her lip.

There was silence in the room after this outburst, and Mrs. Lorraine leaned back in her chair, studying reflectively the flushed face turned up to her.

She was a kind-hearted woman, worldly to her finger tips, refined, cultured, and exquisitely groomed. In her person, nature and art had worked harmoniously. Her face was keen, even interested, as she leaned suddenly forward, and said deliberately:

"You could be a beauty if you wanted to."

"I don't know what you mean."

"You don't have to. But tell me first, do you mind what I do to you? Have you any narrow-minded prejudices?"

"I don't know," replied the girl doubtfully. "Perhaps I have."

Mrs. Lorraine arose, and laughed.

"You had better lay them aside then," she advised nonchalantly, "for I mean to turn you into a beauty, just as Cinderella was turned into a princess by her fairy godmother. Come here!"

She took the girl by the hand, and drew her before a long mirror.

"Now, look at yourself," she commanded peremptorily, "and tell me what you see."

Carol made a petulant little face at her reflection.

"A red-headed girl who would make the old man himself look the other way!"

Mrs. Lorraine laughed.

"Unfortunately," she said, "I can't correct you, but wait! Let me see," looking over her shoulder at the tiny clock; "the fête is at five; we have two good hours yet."

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't ask questions," impatiently, "but tell me—— You took a cab when you came from the station?"

"Yes."

"No one saw you?"

"No, indeed."

"Then we are safe. You have never been to Washington, and nobody here knows you?"

Carol nodded her head assentingly.

"Very well. Ring that bell for Pauline, and come up to my room. On second thought," pausing abruptly, "don't ring yet. I don't want her to *know* anything." She smiled triumphantly. "I intend to accomplish my miracle in secret. You are sure your face was covered when you came?"

"Yes, I had on an automobile veil. I was nothing but a mass of brown chiffon."

Mrs. Lorraine nodded, and swept up the shallow stairs of her home, with the mien of a general conducting a promising engagement.

When she ushered the girl into her little miracle of a room, she closed the door carefully, and, going to the closet, pulled out a kimono, and, flinging it on the bed, said hurriedly:

"Pull off your gown, and put that on, and take down your hair. How did you ever *dare* arrange it in that outrageous fashion? It is the genuine Titian red, but drawn back so it positively tortures one's eyes."

Carol stood like a statue of misery, eying discontentedly the great red twists falling over her shoulders.

"What is the use of trying to do anything with it? You might as well turn a blacking brush into a sonnet."

"My dear! Don't say such things." Mrs. Lorraine gave a little offended shudder. "You had better heat these curling irons. I wish I *dared* have Pauline in, but it wouldn't be safe."

She stood back with the wonderful red hair in her hands while her eyes ran appraisingly over the face in the glass.

"You have your mother's delicate features," she commented enthusiastically, "and her white skin, but your lips are so pale. And your eyebrows and eyelashes are white, perfectly *white*!"

"I know!" despairingly.

"It ruins you. Why, you look like an Albino, but that is easily remedied." She ran her hand into a bureau drawer, and drew out a tiny box and brush. "Now, hold still," she said.

"Are you going to *paint* me?"

"I am going to do anything I like, and you have only to be passive."

Carol sighed as her aunt's deft fingers touched her brows. Quickly and skillfully the little brush did its work.

"Now, look!" Mrs. Lorraine commanded, and the girl, with a gasp of amazement, stared back at her face in the glass. Her large, blue eyes, with a fringe of jet-black lashes and delicate dark brows, were absolutely strange.

"I— Why, I don't know myself!" she stammered.

The elder woman laughed like a girl.

"You won't when I have finished," she cried gayly. "You wave your hair with these, while I find some rouge."

"Not on my face," protestingly.

"No, goose—just a touch on your lips. Don't be prudish. Every one does nowadays."

"But people will see—will know!" in wide-eyed horror.

"Nonsense! Can you tell it on me? Yes, open your big eyes. I do! Just a touch! Going takes it out of one so," apologetically. "This liquid rouge I got in Paris. I defy any-one to detect it. There, now; you look lovely! Oh, you needn't shake your head. I object to having my work disparaged. You have no idea what a success you will be. I have a good mind to ask Pauline— Oh, here she is now! Pauline, I want you to dress Miss Rhea's hair to-day. Do it loose and low. And I want that white gown Barton sent home. Have you a white hat, Carol—lacy, you know?"

The girl nodded under an avalanche of hair.

Mrs. Lorraine went over to the chiffonier, and rummaged recklessly in one of the drawers, tumbling out laces and frou-frous with careless hands. She turned around long enough to look at the girl's head and give a nod of approval.

"Now the white gown. It will fit perfectly. I am a little taller, but everything trails now. I want that silver girdle, Pauline. No, the wide one. Oh, here it is! Now, clasp it tight. Hold your breath, Carol. There! You won't feel it in a minute. Pauline, run and get Miss Rhea's hat, and now—" With a gasp of triumph, Mrs. Lorraine led her niece before the mirror. "And now," she repeated ecstatically, as the door closed, "*look!*"

That afternoon Mrs. Lorraine stepped slowly and regally through the crowds surging around the booths at the Charity Bazaar, with a tall, pale girl at her side; a girl with a mass of sunshine on her head and the most adorable face imaginable. She was introduced discreetly to just the right people, and one eager man after another joined the little group that led to a white gown and a red-haired girl!

Miss Rhea was asked to raffle a baby blanket! That blanket was worth its weight in gold to the bazaar! Miss Rhea was begged to sell a few flowers—just a few! Flowers were at a pre-

mium! Roses sold by her hand realized such sums that the eyes of the haughty patroness glistened triumphantly. In short, Carol was tasting all the sweets of success; tasting them as one tastes a goblet of intoxicating wine hitherto forbidden.

It was almost dark when her aunt, coming up to where she stood, murmured an introduction, and patted the girl encouragingly on the shoulder.

"I can let you have only ten minutes," she said warningly to the tall man who stood at her side, "for we must go. I know every one wants to stay, but it is past six now."

She cast a meaning glance at her niece as she swept away, and Carol, looking into the face of a tall man, with a massive head and the figure of an athlete, flushed to the very roots of her hair.

Her hand went instinctively to her hot cheek. Her face was white as a snowdrop.

The man stood with uncovered head, looking down at her with admiration in his eyes. He did not know her! The girl realized it slowly, and her head went up with a gesture of relief, but her heart was bitter and humiliated.

"I have been trying to get near you all evening," the man was saying deferentially. "I've been asking myself whether you were a goddess dropped out of a clear sky—or just an American girl." As Carol smiled, he added quickly: "They are much the same thing, you know."

She unfurled something fluffy, and shaded her eyes from the sun.

"If I were a goddess, I fancy I should scarcely be content with a mortal man. I should be eating ambrosia and drinking nectar with the gods."

"That depends. Venus stooped to Adonis."

"Yes, but where would one find an Adonis in the nineteenth century?"

She laughed derisively, and something in her tone made the man flush.

"You are unkind."

"One must be *something*," returned the girl indifferently, and turned from him pointedly.

"Permit me to see you to your aunt?"

He spoke with some stiffness, and there was a hint of reproach that touched Carol's sense of justice. What effect did her rudeness have? He did not even understand.

She smiled suddenly, capriciously, and said with a little pout of penitence: "Does hot weather make you cross?"

He laughed.

"It would be impolite, I suppose, to ask *you* the same question?"

"No. And besides, it is not necessary. I have already shown you how cross it makes me."

"You have already shown me how bewitching it makes you."

"You do that very well," with an upward glance that had almost the effect of a caress—it was so sweet, so challenging, so coquettish. "I wonder how much practice it takes to become a past master in the art of making pretty speeches?" curiously.

"Very little if one has a pretty object to make them to."

"Suppose you have an ugly one?"

"I wouldn't have an ugly one!" smiling.

The girl laughed, and her laugh was so bitter that he looked at her in amazement.

"Have I said anything wrong?" he asked.

"No—no, indeed. You are quite truthful, only—— It is dreadful to be plain, isn't it?" appealingly.

"It is something *you* know nothing about," he replied.

She looked at him a minute with an almost inquisitive stare, and then, with a gesture that might have meant anything, walked on.

The shafts of dying sunshine hid in the folds of her gown, and touched her bright hair with burning fingers. A faint, sweet odor as of wild flowers seemed to cling about her. Its illusive sweetness affected the man like a strong stimulant. He grew almost dizzy. Fleecy folds of her white lace gown blew against him, touched his sleeve, his hand.

He turned impulsively to her.

"I wonder where you got your face?"

he asked wonderingly. "Did the fairies give it to you?"

She smiled cynically.

"Perhaps. Yet you would not believe me if I told you it came in a little silver box, a very ordinary little box, and was warranted to last for a season at least." She put down her sunshade as she spoke, and turned her radiant face up to his. "Do you think I made a good bargain?" she asked lightly.

"I think," he said, with intense earnestness, "that you have the most beautiful face in the world." And then, flushing, he apologized.

She laughed at him, and, still laughing, said gayly:

"I am afraid there is something wrong with your eyes. My face is like everything else in life—an illusion."

"Then may God preserve our illusions!" devoutly.

He was looking away from her as he spoke, and Carol's eyes were almost black as they rested on him. She hated him bitterly and determinedly, as women hate without reason, and for a foible.

He asked, after a silence, as if to fill the pause:

"Did you reach Washington to-day?"

"Yes," with an inward qualm. "I came on the five-fifteen. We were late."

He turned quickly.

"We must have come over the same road," with quick eagerness. "But no—I would have seen you had you been on the train."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. There wasn't a pretty woman within a hundred miles of me."

"Perhaps your eyes were again at fault," bitterly.

"I don't think so. There was a girl on my Pullman——"

"I haven't the slightest desire to hear about the girl on your Pullman," rudely. And then, recovering herself: "Forgive me; I have a splitting headache. I must go. There is Aunt Kate. Oh," pausing and lifting her beautiful, angry eyes to his, "I did not hear your name, they mumble so in an introduction. Thank you! Thank you so much.

There is auntie. I must go. Good-by. Oh, I know it will be better in the morning. Good-by again."

When Carol reached home, she slowly unclosed her hand from the little white calling card he had given her. It read simply:

LIEUTENANT COLONEL MALIN DANA, R. E.,
Military Attaché,
His Britannic Majesty's Embassy.

With a hot, angry color sweeping suddenly over her, she tore it straight across.

"I hate foreigners!" she stammered passionately. "I hate them!"

And the white bits of paper fluttered to the floor as she spoke, and lay quite still on the carpet at her feet.

All through the lovely spring months that followed, Carol held uninterrupted sway. The haughty social world of Washington prostrated itself at her feet, and did her homage in divers ways. She was like a sweet, swaying wild flower, throwing a garden full of hothouse beauties into the shade. Their perfume was heavy, pungent, and cloying to the senses; hers brought with it a breath of sweet, damp meadows, of untilled earth, and breezes sweeping high and strong. She had lived alone with her father so long that the bloom of purity, which tickles the palate of a jaded world, belonged to her in its entirety. At the close of a stupid winter, society had found a new plaything.

Several prominent men occupied the unenviable position of "those declined," and several more were secretly afraid of occupying it. Mrs. Lorraine steered her beauty over the dangerous shoals which surround disappointed attachments with masterly skill.

Carol vowed she was heart whole, and her aunt believed it.

Yet Mrs. Lorraine's eyes rested with an ecstatic complaisance on one name that headed the list of the girl's admirers. She was not a heartless woman, but a "good marriage" she deemed as much of a necessity as having bread with her butter. She was far too clever to disclose her ideas to Carol. She

simply threw her in Colonel Dana's way, and waited, with a patience that was superb.

To Carol the days merged into one another with dreamlike rapidity. They were crowded together, each one painted with more glowing colors than the last. She had grown conscious of her power, and experimented with it like a spoiled child. She laughed at love light-heartedly, but the enemy had already stormed her fortress; she was but guarding the citadel with a last desperate strength.

Malin Dana stood close to her; at the door of her heart, knocking, knocking, knocking—until his relentless insistence almost drove her mad. She had laid aside all her resentment for him, feeling with generous impulse that there was a smallness in nourishing against him a wrong of which he was not even conscious.

But between the two there hung a veil thinner than gauze, yet strong enough to hold them apart. It was always there, and no hand but hers could tear it away, and yet she felt it would hang so forever, before she would lift that hand. She was intensely sensitive, and, to herself, she seemed little better than an adventuress. She exaggerated the change in her life until it assumed stupendous proportions.

"I am living a lie," she said passionately one day to her aunt. "I am a fraud from beginning to end. All this adulation does not belong to me. It belongs to the doll you have created, and dressed up, and presented to the world."

Mrs. Lorraine naturally considered all this very trying.

"I never humiliate my own actions by regretting them," she said one day to the girl, with a superb gesture. "You are a *beautiful* woman, even if you do have to resort to a little art, and your fascination is your own. For Heaven's sake, be contented and forget. I am growing positively old with worry. Look at that line," touching an infinitesimal depression in her forehead. "Pauline massages it fifteen minutes every night, but you bring it back in

the day." She sighed petulantly. "However, one has to suffer, I suppose, for chaperoning a beauty, but please try not to be any more absurd than you can help."

Carol smiled in weary acquiescence, but she was unconvinced. She knew that the love, which had grown to her more precious than all the wonders of the world, lay at her feet, and she had but to stoop to take it, but she dared not stoop. Could she say to the man she loved: "I am a cheat. I am an artificial doll. My beauty is like a garment which I put on and take off at will. You wouldn't look at me as I really am. I have won your love by a trick!" Oh, the torture of these thoughts!

She knew the man intimately. Soul to soul they had looked in one another's eyes. She knew that deceit and all falseness were loathsome to him, and she was afraid!

She said to her aunt simply one day, and with tragic determination:

"I cannot marry Colonel Dana. There is no use urging me, for I *cannot*!"

Mrs. Lorraine lay back limply in her chair, and looked at her niece as if she had seen her for the first time.

"I begin to think you are not quite in your right mind, Carol, dear," she said sympathetically, with a bitterness in her voice that cut the still air of the room like a razor. "You are, as you know, absolutely penniless. Of course, if you want to go back and spend the rest of your life on a ranch in Southern California, no one can blame you. It must be charming to rusticate that way. A little monotonous as the years slip by, I should think, but then there is no accounting for tastes."

"You know why I cannot marry him," Carol burst out, turning beautiful, passionate eyes on her aunt. "I won't cheat him, and I can't tell him!"

"Very well, my dear, you won't hurt any one but yourself. He is rich—even in America. Has a position that any woman might envy, and is a most charming man. But, of course, if you want to throw him over, I would be the last to hinder you."

"I dare not tell him."
Mrs. Lorraine laughed contemptuously.

"You are very stubborn when you get an idea in that pretty head of yours, my dear, but I will repeat again: There is absolutely no necessity of telling him. A woman's toilet should not be interesting to her husband. I know a great many husbands who would be exceedingly trying and horribly unhappy if they knew, but——" She lifted her delicate shoulders suggestively.

"I cannot live a lie."

"I wouldn't ask you to, my dearest child, but why tell all you know? It is so simple—but you are a very unfortunate girl. You have *such* a troublesome conscience."

"I wouldn't change it," passionately.

"No, but you might train it a little."

She smiled, and reached for her book. "Take my advice, Carol, dear, and give your conscience a most rigorous course of training. As a conscience, it is positively offensive!" And she said no more.

That same evening Carol dressed herself with exquisite care, that her beauty might gladden the eyes of one man. Her face, under its burning aureole of hair, glowed like a rare, pale flower; her white robe, pure as a maiden's soul, fell in stately, loving, folds from neck to foot, girded in by a thread of silver and amethyst.

It was late before Carol stepped out onto the porch, and later before the last caller left, and she could turn with a little sigh to Dana.

"I thought they would never go," he said impatiently, dragging one of the porch mats close to her feet, and seating himself. "I *cannot* see you alone, no matter how I try. Where is Mrs. Lorraine this evening?"

"Auntie has a dreadful headache, and begs to be excused."

He smiled into her eyes.

"She is excused, with all my heart, as long as I have you. You are all I want in the world."

"You are easily satisfied," she said, laying her bare arm on the cool stone railing.

10

He looked at it enviously a moment, and then sighed.

"I suppose it would sound absurd for me to say I wish I were a stone, but I do!"

She removed her arm.

"It grows very cold and uncomfortable," she said meaningly.

"It is still blessed, for your arm has rested on it."

"It doesn't seem to feel any great degree of ecstasy." Her eyes sought his shyly. "It is a very sensible stone."

He reached passionately for her hand, but it fluttered from him like a butterfly.

"I am afraid the stone could give you lessons in manners," she murmured gayly. "Do you know my hand objects to being snatched?"

"Then why does it always invite snatching?"

"It does not!" indignantly.

"I beg your pardon. It has said in a hundred different ways to-night: Take me! Take me!"

"Don't be absurd!"

"I am not. Don't you see that I am serious, so serious that I am afraid to speak?"

He bent nearer in the sweet, dark stillness, until his cheek almost touched her white gown. It was as soft as gossamer, and the fragrance of a million flowers seemed imprisoned in it.

"Dear, do you know now that I come to speak, to tell you, I find that I have no words. How can mere words unlock my heart for you to see? To-night when I walked up here, I heard a little child say to its mother: 'I just oove you to death, mother.' Oh, Carol, those are my words out of the mouth of a child! You are all to me; all, *all*! All the blood, and life, and sunshine of the world are in your smile. You are so still—so white. If you could know how I have longed to take you, all pale and pure, into my arms. *Speak* to me, Carol!"

"I cannot!"

He leaned forward, and touched her hand; their pulses thrilled together. She swayed toward him. His longing

arms closed on her gown. Trembling mightily, he tried to draw her to him.

"I love you! I love you!" he breathed, ashen pale. "Oh, don't go! I love you, dear. Don't tremble so. See, I am gentle. What is there to fear?"

She almost tore his hands from about her, and stepped back. Her face was still and unnaturally white. She was more of a wraith than a woman. Putting her hands on his breast, she looked into his face.

"Do you love me?" she whispered faintly. "Just *me* or my beauty? Tell me," with almost a wail in her voice. "I must know."

He laughed aloud, and laid his hands, warm and masterful, on hers.

"Just you," he swore gayly, "just your sweet self, you adorable woman. You, with that mouth that is forever whispering, 'you may,' and those eyes forever flashing 'you care not!'"

"Oh, don't jest! It means all—*all*. If you only knew!"

"Knew what, sweetheart?"

"Knew—knew——"

"And I do so want to know."

She looked at him curiously, almost tragically. Then she said with bitter emphasis:

"Wait here, and you shall. But once more: Do you love me?"

"As God loves you," reverently, and, as he stood there strong and straight, she believed him.

"Wait," she said faintly, "until I come." And she flitted through the door like a shadow.

Dana stood alone on the porch, looking up into the still sky. The moon hung low and white amid the branches of the trees. The street was still; most of the houses were dark, for the city was asleep. The man stood quietly, his arms still trembling with the touch of the woman he loved. An ecstasy possessed him that was like a strain of divine music. Love was everywhere, and the world but a casket to hold the gem. His arms ached for his wife.

And then, out of the open doorway, where the light streamed, came a woman—tall and pale, in a white gown. But

she was a stranger, quite a stranger.

And yet——

"Carol!"

The man cried the name aloud, and his voice was harsh.

"Yes. Look at me quickly. See, this is just as I am. You asked me once where I got my beauty, and I said the fairies brought it in a little silver box. Look!" holding it out passionately. "I am not a beauty at all; I am just a *fraud*!"

"For God's sake, what have you done to yourself?" His voice was stern.

Her lips trembled. She tried to explain.

"I wasn't a beauty. I never was. And, oh, I *heard* you say," sobbing, "that I was ugly enough to—to——"

"What *are* you talking about?"

"On the train—you know what you said about the red-headed girl. It was me—I should say I," tragically, "and auntie fixed my hair, and blacked my eyes, and turned me into a beauty, and," flinging out her arms, "I won't blame you if you despise me!"

There was an awful silence for seconds, moments, and then—Dana threw back his head and laughed aloud. Laughed until the street rang, and the birds awoke, frightened.

She raised hurt eyes to his, and he took her by the hand, and led her into the lighted hall.

"Show me how you do this disgraceful thing," he commanded mischievously.

The tears were near her eyes.

"Dear one, I am curious. Show me what is in this magic silver box, that it can create such a beauty in such a short space of time!" He opened the little lid. "Nothing but a tiny black brush and a little red bottle!"

She looked in his laughing eyes, and the slow color came back to her face. Her mouth quivered into a smile.

"Will you promise never to tell?" she asked in a whisper.

"I swear!"

"Well, then you touch your lips like this. I must go to the glass. This is called Bloom of Roses. Auntie got it

in Paris. See how sweet it smells. And then—the lashes take longer.”

Her sweet face peered anxiously into the mirror, and her lord, standing behind her, suddenly caught her in his arms, paint box and all.

“Look at me, Carol. Put those things down. I love you, you absurd child, you little Puritan saint. Did you think such a hardened old sinner as I would mind your pretty foibles? Oh, my pure, white heart, let me have those hands. God bless them! You have not promised me, beloved; you have not told me anything.”

“I am ashamed to,” shyly.

“But I am not ashamed to hear.”

“They will say you have married a penniless American girl with red hair,” with drooped lids.

“They will say I have married an American queen, who carries her dowry on her head, and it is pure gold.”

“That she blackens her brows, and paints her lips.”

“That ebony is honored by touching her beautiful brows, and the roses proud to lend their color for her lips!”

“Of course, if you will not be serious,” struggling to break from him.

“I was never more so in my life. It is a serious thing to ask a beauty to be your wife.”

“Do you *really* want me?” shyly.

“Want you? I love you. Can’t you feel my heart throb? I want you just as you are. I want *you*.”

And then for the first time a roguish smile touched the girl’s lips, and, with a sweetness all her own, she crept to him, and, lifting her face, said resignedly:

“Well, if you want a girl who is ‘ugly enough to make the old man himself look the other way,’ I suppose—I should not object.”

GYPSY SONG

THE wind, and the sky, and the sun,
And the open trail and free,
A staff and a pack—and One
To take to the road with me,
Over the hills that lure,
Under the trees that sway,
Laughing, and strong, and—poor,
Out on the wander way!

The wind, and the sun, and the sky,
A star-strewn vault at night;
And two hearts beating high,
Athrill with an old delight!
Out from the fret of town,
Free of the ties that gall,
Venturing up and down
Under the wander thrall.

The sky, and the sun, and the wind,
And One on the road I fare,
Slender and gypsy-skinned,
My gypsy ways to share.
Life that is void of stress,
Love that is leal and true;
The road—and the winds’ caress,
Sun and the sky—and you!

BERTON BRALEY.



T is very hard to understand people, and it is not easy to understand yourself. I can always understand things better if I write them down. That is why I am writing this. I am Eleanor Davies. I am nineteen and a half, and I am engaged to Geoffrey Dent. At least, I shall be when father agrees. He hasn't answered his letter yet, and he says that I shall not marry him till I am twenty-one, unless he is sure that I am not doing it just for money.

It happened on the cruise that I went with mother. She says that I managed it very cleverly. Father thinks that mother made me do it. He knows mother, he says. I don't think he does, really. He doesn't know me! I didn't know him, either. He is so smiling and easy-going—like a nice, big, good-tempered, grown-up boy. I never dreamed that he would make any bother about it. Mother was wiser. She said: "Your father will be a difficulty," and I had better leave it to her to tell him, and coax him round. I did. But he wasn't coaxed round, and said that he must speak to me alone.

He didn't begin like I expected, but put his arm around my waist and kissed me.

"I've loved you all your life, Siren," he said—he calls me that—"and if you love anybody, it is your old dad." That is true. "Do you mean to be honest with me, darling?"

"Well," I said, "I didn't mean, daddy; but I suppose I must. As hon-

est as I can be. I can't tell you the truth if I don't know it; and if I do you won't understand. You'll look at it your own way, not mine; and it's my affair, not yours, you know!"

"I'll try to put myself in your place," he promised.

"You can't," I warned him. "You don't understand me."

"Tell me about yourself," he asked; but I shook my head.

"I'm not good at saying things," I told him. "You know I could never say my lessons properly, and you used to think I didn't know them, but I did, because I could write them down."

"Well," he asked, "can you write *this* down?"

"What do you want to know?"

"How the engagement came about, and whether you love him."

"Is that all?"

"Why!" he cried. "What else could there be?"

"Me!" I told him. "That is what you have to understand before you can judge. I am a siren, you know; and sirens don't do things like ordinary people do—nice people, like you, daddy. You must try—try—try to understand *me*. Then you will see why I want to marry him."

"You do want to, then?" he said quickly.

"Yes," I said. "You wouldn't ask that if you understood me, daddy. You think mother made me do it. Well, ask mother if she could make me marry any one I didn't want to. *She* understands me—three-quarters of me. You

understand the other quarter, and she doesn't."

He drew a deep breath.

"You are a strange girl," he told me.

"I know I am," I agreed. "I'll write you three things, separately: about the strange girl; about her engagement; and whether she loves her fiancé—in the way that sirens love, if they can. That is what you have to consider. It's no use your saying that I must love him in *your* way. You see—but I won't talk about it, only write. I'll be very honest, and write just as if it were only for myself. The quarter of me that you understand wants to understand the other three-quarters. Will that do, daddy?"

He sighed.

"It sounds very morbid," he said; "but, if you think I can help you best that way—yes, dear. God bless you!"

He squeezed me hard, and kissed me again. There are cleverer things than cleverness, I think. Father isn't clever. Mother and I are. But he can make us do things that clever people couldn't. I have never told a big lie to father, and I shan't tell him one now.

I think children grow up what people expect them to be—I mean what they think people expect. When I was very, very little father nicknamed me Siren. The nickname seemed to fit, and ever after everybody called me that. Little girls of four take names for true. When people called me a girl, or pretty, or, sometimes, good, or, often, naughty, they meant that I *was* a girl, and pretty, and naughty, and good. When they called me Siren I thought they meant I *was* a young siren, and that I had to grow into a big one; a siren like my beautiful mother, with her greeny eyes, and long yellow hair, and her way of falling into curves; and, like the siren in the picture that father bought when I was seven. It hangs in our drawing-room now.

The siren's face was exactly like mother's, only her hair was longer, and nearly dressed her. She had a little harp, and she sat on green rocks. The waves broke at her feet, and I used to

wonder if the spray was going to wet them. It hung in the air, in the picture. There was a sailor in the water—a drowning sailor—floating by. I used to dream about it, and pull my hair to make it grow long enough to dress me when I was a real siren, and sat on a rock.

When I could read I read everything I could get hold of about sirens and mermaids. They were just alike, I gathered, except that mermaids had a fishy tail, and sirens had legs; and I was rather afraid that I might change into a tail, until mother assured me that I should not. So I settled down to be a siren, and behave as sirens behaved, according to the books.

It never occurred to me to criticize their actions. They were simply examples to instruct me, I thought, like the experiments in my little chemistry book. I waited anxiously for the time when I should sit on a rock and catch sailors. Meanwhile, I worked assiduously at sirens. I must make little boys admire me, I understood—and little boys did—and I must not care for little boys, and I didn't. That was only imitating my lovely mother. Men admired her, and she cared nothing for them—except you, daddy. I supposed that a siren might love her husband. Now I see that caring for you was the flaw in mother's sirens—*and mine!*

I did not talk to father about my ideas. I gathered that he did not really understand sirens. I questioned mother a deal about them. With her help, I translated my notions of sirens into modern life as I grew older, and no longer expected—or desired—to sit on cold rocks, or to drown sailors. It came to this: that beauty was a queen's gift, to sell dear; and that the greatest drawback to a good saleswoman was a heart. When I was about seventeen mother spoke to me quite seriously about this.

"If you let a man get into your heart," she said, "you're caught. It's no use fighting him. You're netted like a little fish, Siren; like your father netted me. Do you know, child, I might have been a princess? A real, live, Russian princess, with diamonds

enough to cover me! If you fall in love you can't help it; and I can't help you. You'll have to marry him, and put up with it. But if you *don't* fall in love—and you won't, unless you throw yourself in the way of it—but you're a very unsentimental child—you can make a great marriage, and have all the things I've missed. Money spells everything nowadays. Marry a man with money, Siren, if you can like the man reasonably, and you'll have the world at your feet."

After that counsel I looked upon all nice men as dangerous fishermen, trying to catch a poor little siren, and was wary of their net. It was *I*, I told myself, who would fish! It wasn't just money that I liked, but catching the fish—power!

I don't think my sirenness was all teaching. It must have been born in me. I loved admiration. I was terribly vain. I used to admire myself in the glass, and practice moving gracefully, and falling in curves, like mother does, when I sat. I tried deliberately to make conquests from the time when I wore short frocks. I didn't see anything wrong in my behavior. What else was a siren to do?

And, if you think, there are some excuses for me. The best excuse is that I had no example of the harm that I might do by my sireny fascinations. Mother was the only other siren I knew, and I never saw her drown any sailors—only give them a good ducking. She was always very, very careful never to go too far. I know now that her forbearance wasn't on account of the silly sailors, but to avoid hurting you. I think you ought to remember how greatly mother was always admired, and how she always loved only you.

There are good points in sirens. *I* never shipwrecked any one. I only gave them the tiniest ducking. I was too much afraid of being caught myself to carry my flirtations very far; and mother stopped me if I was foolish.

"Don't flirt any more with that ridiculous boy, Siren," she would say. "He'll be a nuisance, if you do."

"He's a nuisance already," I generally told her; and then I would begin with somebody fresh.

They were only very little flirtations. There were two or three men who proposed to me, but it really was their own fault. One did it the first time we met, and another the second time; and I never had the least idea of trying to attract the third. Mother said no one could help such accidents if she had looks like mine. I managed to stop all the rest before they got so far. I grew quite clever at it, and generally contrived to remain good friends with them.

I have read this over, and it doesn't sound quite honest; but it is more honest than it sounds. I tried very hard indeed to make myself generally attractive; but I never once tried to attract any one in particular more than enough to know that I could—until I knew Mr. Dent. I am going to write about him next time. This is only to make you understand just what I am—if I am what I was before I went on the trip with mother; and before you made it plain that you thought I ought not to be engaged unless I was in love. Really and truly, I never looked at it that way before. But I always attended to your lectures because they were so few; and I am attending carefully to this one.

I rather like your idea of falling in love. I think it must be nice to love your husband; and, of course, he ought to love you. That part is all right. He will! But it seems to me there are different ways of being in love. A siren may love a fisherman, and let him net her. I didn't do that—at least I don't think so; but I don't think I should mind if I found that I had been caught. That's one way. The other way is that she may catch a sailor, and then—not exactly love him, but not want to drown him or let him go.

Is that loving enough, for a siren—like I am?

Mother saved up for the trip for a long time; but she didn't tell you till you collected that big old bill that you never thought would be paid. You

said: "And you've never worried me for the money all this time. Beauty! You *good* Beauty!" Sirens *have* good points, daddy. This one didn't worry you, any more than mother did; though she was mad to go, and we both knew you'd offer what you couldn't afford. Then you gave us the rest of the money, and sent us off.

Mother had lists of the people who were going, and studied them before she chose the trip. I think she chose the one we went, on account of me *and* Mr. Dent. You see, he isn't an ordinary millionaire. He is rather good-looking. He is well educated. He is not the least bit vulgar. He is not a frightfully old millionaire; only thirty-seven. Do you know, I believe you will like him when you see him. That will be on Friday, unless I write to him not to come. I think a girl with a heart—not a siren—could easily like him for himself.

Mother told me about him before we started.

"It is the best chance you will ever get," she declared.

I thought so, too; and, as soon as I met him, and found that he was not a musty old millionaire, but quite smart and nice, I most deliberately made up my mind to marry him if he asked me. I did more than that. I made up my mind to make him ask me if I could. You've got to know the horrid truth. I see now that it is horrid. I didn't then.

I didn't even think of loving him. It did not occur to me that I could love any one—except you, of course; but that's very different.

I thought at first that he would be quite easy to catch, and that I had nothing to do but to look pretty. He spoke to me the first evening, and made no secret of admiring me; but I think I was too siren, and that put him on his guard. He is *worryingly* clever; too clever for me, I sometimes fear.

"You ought to be called Siren," he said, that very first night.

"Why?" I told him. "That is what father calls me!"

"Give a little girl a bad name!" he

remarked, and laughed; and I wasn't clever for once, and defied him.

"Oh, no!" I said. "Name a bad little girl!"

I wonder which it was, daddy?

"Then I'll take warning," he answered.

He pretended to say it jestingly; but I felt that he *had* taken warning.

The way that he tried to protect himself was to treat me as a child. I told mother so; but she only laughed.

"He concedes you one more attraction," she said. "You can fish with your childishness! But you don't want instruction from me. If you're silly, and do what I shouldn't advise, your silliness will be attractive."

Mother is very, very clever.

I thought that *he* was fishing for me; to make me like him, I mean. I didn't tell mother my suspicion. I wanted to do my own fishing. I thought it would lure him on to think that he was the fisherman, not I; and I'd snap at his bait, and pull him into the water. It sounds awful; but you can't realize what an attractive sport man-catching is—to a siren! Just consider the trouble *you* will take to catch a two-pound fish.

As the time went on, however, I began to fear that he really looked upon me only as a child. He never tried to flirt with me. He never showed any sign of annoyance if I flirted with other men. Sometimes he teased me about it. Sometimes he almost encouraged me.

"Go and play with your mice, pussycat," he told me once, when we were coming to a port, and he was busy writing telegrams, "but, mind you, don't catch a big rat in mistake. You're only a kitten."

That was the first time that a man had practically told me to go and not bother him. I was so angry that I gave myself away again.

"I'd like to scratch you!" I told him.

And then he set his mouth; and I knew he had made up his mind that he wouldn't propose to me.

"Try, if it amuses you, Siren," he said very quietly.

I bit my lips before I answered. I

thought a lot of things in that few seconds. I may have been foolish or I may have been clever. Anyhow, I made up my mind that the best way to catch him was to dare him. I was determined to catch him now. I didn't think any more of his money, only of proving that I could scratch. I wanted him, like you want a fish that you fish for; not because I was the least bit in love with him, I thought.

"Sirens don't 'try,'" I said. "They just sit and look pretty; and people come and 'scratch themselves against the cat,' as I used to say, when I was a little girl. Aren't you sorry you're old and tough, and past scratching?"

He flushed a trifle, though he laughed; and I got up and walked off; and played with mice! We weren't quite so friendly for a few days after that. Mother watched him, and she said that he watched me. I didn't talk to him much. I merely looked pretty.

Then we had a rough day. Mother stayed in her cabin, and so did most of the people. I lay in a chair on deck. Mr. Dent walked about smoking a big cigar, and talking to the ship's officers. There was no one else who seemed to care for talking. He tucked me up, and brought another cushion and a big rug of his own, and put it over mine, and fetched something sticky in a glass, that made me feel not so sick and rather sleepy, after I drank it.

"Shut your eyes," he advised, "and try to sleep. Then you'll feel better."

"Thank you," I said.

I shut my eyes; and I did go to sleep.

When I woke he was sitting down talking to the captain. They were a good distance off, but the wind blew my way. I have sharp ears, and I heard most of their conversation.

"We are savages," the captain said, "with a thin veneer of civilization."

"A deuced thick veneer," Mr. Dent contradicted. "Look at me! I've all the primitive instincts. And they can't peer through my veneer of respectability."

"Don't be too sure," the captain said. "The veneer lasts long enough in the

city; but I've seen some tough veneer crack in the tropics. A woman's likely to go through the hardest coat of mail any time. There was a pair on the last voyage—assorted sexes—a stern, hard chap and a demure little mouse of a thing. He was married; and she was married. You might have copied them in plaster for a monument of respectability. Well, they kept their respectability. Went overboard together, ten degrees south of the line. The primitive instincts are too much for any man—or woman; and there are worse things than going overboard. Marrying the wrong woman's one of them. I've known you twenty odd years. Since you were a lad. You came this voyage with your mother, I remember."

"Yes," Mr. Dent said. "Yes. I know what you're thinking."

"You know what I'm thinking," the captain agreed. "There's a lot of primitive instinct about a certain little girl." He looked toward me. "And the mother. I don't know which is the better to look at. A pair of sirens!"

"I should say there is a lack of primitive instinct about them," Mr. Dent remarked. "No heart."

"I don't know about the mother," the captain said. "The girl's primitive instinct isn't heart certainly. It's hunting."

"Exactly," Mr. Dent agreed.

The captain shook his head. I saw him under my eyelashes.

"I dare say you won't be caught," he said; "but if you go too far you'll pay for it."

"I won't be caught," said Mr. Dent; "and—I've got to pay, you see. Now you know. Let's drop it."

"If I were you," the captain suggested, "I'd get off at the next port. You may think you're safe from capture; but she's the prettiest siren I've ever set eyes on; prettier even than her mother; and *she's* a royal beauty. Little Miss Green Eyes will break the hearts of half the fellows on board before the end of the voyage. I'd like to put the little hussy in irons! And I wouldn't! She gives me such a smile, I can't help a soft feeling for her."

"Primitive instinct," Mr. Dent remarked.

"Yes," the captain agreed. "You have to make excuses for these beauties. I dare say Miss Green Eyes has a primitive instinct waiting for some big savage who'll woo her with a club. Well, I must get on the bridge. Don't fool around tucking her in. It's dangerous. I've known a dozen engagements begin that way."

The captain went; and Mr. Dent came and looked at me; and tucked in my rugs quietly. I was laughing with delight inwardly; but I looked up, as if he had roused me, and sighed mournfully.

"I am horribly uncomfortable," I said. "Everything is rucked up. You're very nice and kind. *Do* put me straight."

"The best way would be to make another chair ready and lift you into it," he proposed. "Shall I?"

"Please!" I said. "Only lift me very slowly, and don't joggle me."

He prepared the chair, and lifted me up very, very slowly. He breathed very hard. I don't think it was my weight that made him. I suppose you understand, daddy, why I made him do it? I was absolutely determined to catch him, now I knew what he thought of me. It served him right for speaking of me the way he had spoken to the captain. Besides, it would be such a proud capture, because he was strong and clever, and saw the hook, and was determined not to be caught.

"Thank you so much," I said. "If I were always sick, I should quite like you. Tuck me in round the neck."

He tucked me in very carefully.

"There is a proverb about a person who was sick," he mentioned.

"Yes. Poor old devil! I expect he has trifling relapses into goodness if any one would give him a chance."

"I think he is past relapses," Mr. Dent declared. "I wonder if sirens are?"

"I wonder," I said, in a plaintive little voice that almost made me laugh.

If I had just said that, and then held my tongue, and shut my eyes, I think he would have believed me; but

I must needs look at him, and be sireny. He took warning at once.

I retrieved my error partly by being so giddy that I could not stand when he helped me downstairs later. He had to carry me part of the way. I felt too bad to be sireny. When he left me at the cabin door I just staggered in, and tumbled down on mummy. Poor old mummy was quite cross. I was dreadfully ill, too, but I laughed.

"Rough weather is good for sirens," I told her; but she didn't pay any attention.

She said she would never, never come on a ship again unless you came with her. I lay on the floor till the stewardess came in and put me to bed. She was a nice old thing. She told me I was the prettiest dear that ever came on board, and I should be all right in the morning.

I was. It was so nice to be well again that I felt kind to all the world. I went up to Mr. Dent when I saw him and curtsied very prettily, and said:

"Good sir, a fair lady, erstwhile suffering grievously from the unruliness of the elements, gives you great thanks for your efforts to alleviate her misfortunes. I am really and truly grateful. I know if I say so nicely you won't believe me. So perhaps if I say it in a silly way you will think I mean to thank you sensibly."

He laughed right out loud.

"Say it nicely," he told me; and I held out my hand.

"You were very good to me yesterday," I told him. "Thank you very much."

He gripped my hand till I squealed. He was very nice for the rest of the morning. So was I. I *felt* nice and good till lunch. Then I heard that he was leaving the ship at the next port, on the following morning. Mother heard it, too. She spoke to me about it in our cabin.

"You haven't refused him?" she asked.

"No," I said. "He hasn't asked me."

"I suppose he is afraid that he would if he stayed," she remarked, drawing on the carpet with her foot. You know

how she does when she is planning something.

"I suppose so," I agreed.

"You think he is in love with you?" she wanted to know.

"Yes," I said.

"Do you like him?" she inquired.

"In a way," I owned. "Not—not in the way you like father, you know."

"I know that," she said. "I think you like him as well as you will like anybody. It's the best chance you'll ever get, Siren."

I shrugged myself.

"I can't make him ask me," I told her. "He wants some one who—some one with a heart, mummy."

"Can't you persuade him that you have one?" she said. "You're very clever, Siren."

"So is he," I told her. "Besides—No, I shan't pretend. If he doesn't want me as I am I don't want him. Besides—I can't."

"It's a fancy-dress ball to-night," she reminded me.

"Yes," I agreed.

"You'd better not wear that dress you brought," she advised me. "It will only—only frighten him off."

"Then I'll wear it, and defy him," I declared; and I did.

It was a dress covered over with dried seaweed, and a wreath of seaweed for my hair; and the shoes were scaly, like headless fishes. I had a little harp; and I played a few chords on it now and then. You know I can play on anything. I could have sung to it, but I didn't. I thought it would seem too actressy.

He had three dances with me. One of them was the last. There were "extras," but I wouldn't dance them. I sat out with him. I knew that he felt in awful danger. He did not talk about one thing at a time, as he generally does, but kept changing subjects. At last I drew him on to the most dangerous subject—me! I didn't need fancy dress and a harp to be a siren, he declared, only my hair and eyes. I laughed, and turned so that the moonlight fell upon me, and looked at him. He seemed as if he couldn't take his look away from

me. I really think he tried to, and couldn't.

"Your eyes are a wonderful color," he said at last, as if he were talking to himself. "What do you call them?"

I played two or three very, very faint chords on my little harp before I answered him; just to give him fair warning that I was a siren.

"Primitive instincts," I told him.

He sat like a statue for nearly a minute. He knew, of course, that I had heard him talking to the captain, and that I meant to defy him not to love me. Presently I laughed. The laugh seemed to rouse him. He leaned forward, and seized both my arms.

"I'll *make* you love me!" he declared.

He was so fierce that he frightened me for a moment. Then I laughed again.

"You've scratched yourself against the cat!" I cried.

He let go my arms, and sat back and stared at me. I wanted to say something to defy him more, but—it was an unsireny weakness. I didn't want to hurt him any more. Besides, I didn't want him to go away.

"I—I—" I began; and he caught hold of me suddenly and kissed me! It made me feel funny, and I cried.

"You understand that I ask you to marry me?" he said in my ear.

"Yes," I answered. "You—you are very silly."

"Will you?" he persisted.

I considered for a long time. I knew I was going to say "yes," but I didn't know how I was going to say it.

"If you ask me again to-morrow morning," I told him; "not unless. You see—you are so clever that I don't need to explain things to you. Good night."

I held out my hand; and he took it.

"Don't you like me a little bit, Siren?" he asked.

"I like you," I owned, "in the silly way that I am capable of liking people. That is why I am giving you another chance. If I were you I'd go away to-morrow as soon as we're in harbor—before I'm up. That won't be

till eight. I'm not a nice girl at all. Good night."

"Good night," he said.

He was going to kiss me again, but I bobbed, and ran away.

Mother looked at me curiously when we went below. She only looked, and didn't say anything. We didn't speak till we were in our berths.

"Mother," I said, then, "he asked me; and I said I'd say 'yes'—if he asked me again to-morrow morning."

"You are a curious girl," mother declared. "I'm afraid he'll go."

I didn't say anything.

I went on the deck about a quarter past eight the next morning. He hadn't gone. He came up to me and took my arm, and smiled.

"Now say 'yes,' Siren," he begged.

"Yes," I whispered.

"Let's start by being very good friends," he proposed. "I want to announce our engagement, so that I can take you ashore, and buy you presents. Let me have that pleasure."

"Yes," I agreed, "if they're only little presents. Please, only little things this time."

"This time," he agreed.

That's how I became engaged to him.

I knew I could never write this part. I didn't know if I loved him or not. You see, I had never practiced falling in love, only flirting; and I don't know

how a girl in love ought to feel, or what she would do.

I could only think of one way to find out. So I wrote to Geoffrey before I wrote anything else, and so that I should get his answer before I came to this part. This is what I said:

Please, Godfrey, do I love you? Father wants to know. If I do he says I can marry you soon. If I don't I can marry your money when I am twenty-one, and not before.

I do not know if I love you; but I will marry you if you lose your money. I'd rather you didn't, all the same.

I think you will know because you wouldn't be satisfied with a sweetheart who did not love you; and you must know if you are satisfied with me.

You are to answer this, and not a word more. Be sure you don't write a word more! Not even a "dear."

Please, Godfrey, am I satisfactory?

Here is his answer:

You are most satisfactory.

He has written me another very long letter, but I shan't show you that.

I don't know that I need show you this, because mother has spoken to you, and I think she has persuaded you that I may be engaged. She laughed at me about it.

"It's no use wriggling, little fish," she said. "You're caught!"

That's what Geoffrey says.

What Geoffrey says is sure to be right, so—yes, daddy, I'm in the net!

MYRTLE

WREATHS of myrtle rather than leaves of laurel

Twine for me, O Fates, in your endless weaving!

What is fame but crying of empty voices

Faint as an echo!

What is fame but gleams of a dimming rushlight?

Only love is bright like a flaming pharos

When the night of life is a purple mantle

Veiling the eyelids!

So with myrtle leaves, not with leaves of laurel,

Crown my brows, O Fates, ye inscrutable sisters!

Over time that fades and o'er death that darkens

Love is eternal!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

IN his new book, "Keeping Up With Lizzie," published by Harper & Brothers, Mr. Irving Bacheller has achieved a new feat in literature; he has taken a plain tract, and sugar-coated and gilded and decorated it in order to make it palatable. It is a monograph on the increased cost of living.

The story is told by Honorable Socrates Potter, a shrewd, humorous Yankee lawyer in a small Connecticut town, where prices are low and the simple life is contentedly lived. But Sam Henshaw, the village grocer, begins to have aspirations for his daughter Lizzie, and his effort to make her an American queen changes the whole status of life in Pointview, affecting even the price of ham and apples, butter and eggs, so that the entire community is taxed to pay for Lizzie's education. Nor did it stop there, for Lizzie's brilliant efflorescence stirred the zeal and ambition of others, until, as Mr. Potter states, "More than half the population converted property into cash, and cash into folly." And so it went on until Lizzie woke to the error of her ways and reformed just in time to save the village from ruin.

But this is not all; there is a homily, designed to allure young men, on the profit to be derived from intensive farming of abandoned farms, and the assertion is made that the income of the farmers of the future will exceed the earnings of forty average lawyers. Mr. Bacheller also pays his respects to the idle rich on the joy of a houseful of children, either adopted or home grown. His text is that there are only three real luxuries for women: "work, chil-

dren, motherhood—that to shirk responsibility is to forfeit happiness."

Mr. Bacheller is a twentieth-century prophet, but he is as clever as B'r'er Rabbit in concealing his methods and motives. He knows better than to deal in invective which nobody would read, so he chooses a parable, a most amusing and characteristic one.



In Francis Lynde's new book, "The Price," published by Charles Scribner's Sons, Kenneth Griswold, the hero, defeated in his attempt to make a living by his pen, decides to take by force what he considers to be ethically his, holds up a bank president, takes one hundred thousand dollars, and escapes.

He is, of course, relentlessly pursued—he is even arrested once, but gets off—and is ever on the point of being imprisoned. It is a constant duel between him and the law.

But all his cleverness would have availed him nothing but for the almost uncanny astuteness of Margery Grier-son. She is an heiress, the daughter of a wolfish old capitalist, and appears to her critical and envious world as a piquant and pretty and unconventional young woman with the disarming manner of a spoiled and charming child. In reality, she is a mistress of resource, clear-headed, and far-seeing, and it is owing to her that every proof against Griswold is finally destroyed, and that his crime can never be proven.

But through his love for her he is finally forced to the conclusion that, "right or wrong in the highest ethical fields, the accepted social order had proved itself strong enough to make its

own laws and to provide far-reaching penalties for their infraction." So he gives himself up, pays the price, and emerges to find Margery waiting for him beyond the prison gates.

The book gives Mr. Lynde a fine opportunity to display his peculiar gifts as a literary puzzle maker, an originality in plot building, a grasp of the mysteries of construction, and a capacity to handle what is known in the jargon of the critics as the element of suspense.



"The immortal truth was clear to him—that a man is young as often as he falls in love. Again, to her lover a woman is what she makes him feel. Whether she is fair or ill-favored, whether she is worthy or worthless, whether she is formed like Venus or clasps him in arms as thin as penholders, to him she is supreme, and while he adores her he is young."

This is the significant conclusion which Conrad reached, according to Leonard Merrick's biography of him, which Mitchell Kennerley publishes, under the title, "Conrad in Quest of His Youth."

Conrad is a delightful sentimentalist with a redeeming sense of humor. He is approaching middle age, and sets out on a pilgrimage to revisit past scenes and old loves in order to recapture the ardors and enthusiasms and joys and despairs of youth. His adventures leave him cold, until his encounter with the incomparable Rosalind brings him the revelation, for she is as philandering and adventurous as he himself.

It is all told with a whimsical wit that is irresistible. There is little plot to the book, but it is not necessary, for Mr. Merrick's knowledge of human nature is so complete, his sophistication so obvious, and his art so certain that mere invention of incident would spoil the story.



"Esther Damon," by Mrs. Fremont Older, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, is a story of one of those economic and social experiments which

have been tried now and again in the United States, principally on the west coast. This particular Utopia is known as Robert Orme's Miniature Republic. It takes its name from its founder, a man of ideals and education, who has redeemed himself from the debasing results of the drink habit.

Into his community, which maintains itself through the practice of various beautiful handicrafts, comes Esther Damon, a handsome, warm-blooded girl, cast out by her father and mother because of her lapse from virtue. After her bitter experience, she is befriended by an eccentric and wealthy old woman, and eventually becomes a weaver in Orme's community and later the old woman's heiress. Of course, Orme and she fall in love. She suffers a somewhat spectacular conversion, is reunited to her father and mother. Finally she makes Orme happy.

The book serves at least to stimulate interest in Mrs. Older's future work, for it has a certain power and sincerity, neutralized a little perhaps by the amateurish handling of the material.



"The House of the Seven Gables," by Mina L. Duryea, published by D. Appleton & Co., is the tale of a little group of worldlings who take refuge in a charming old French country house, the Château de Pelouse, built by Louis XIV., who hunted wild boars in its park.

But they do not linger all the time in its green seclusion, and the real interest in the book lies in the cleverness with which the contrasts of urban and suburban life are maintained. One moment we are with the charming and anonymous widow—who tells the tale in the first person—shopping in the Rue de la Paix, or taking luncheon in the treetops at Sceaux Robinson, or tea under the red parasols in the Ritz Garden, or at the Pré Catalan.

In the next chapter we are back again at the lovely, lonely old estate where Aylwin's mother roams among the tree-shaded alleys with Lord Ashburne, and Margaret paints all day in the vast

salon she has transformed into a studio, with a real, if incognito, Italian prince posing for her study of an archangel.

There is plenty of the necessary love interest, a number of amusing and quite fresh fictional incidents, and one or two good bits of characterization. It is written with a light, sophisticated touch, and, if never in the least exciting, is entertaining to the last word.



The gentleman jockey has long been a picturesque figure in English fiction, but the gentleman chauffeur and the gentleman aviator are comparatively new arrivals. The chauffeur is the hero in Henry Kitchell Webster's story, "The Girl in the Other Seat," published by D. Appleton & Co.

Longstreet is the only American who had ever won the French *Grand Prix*. But his ambition reached farther than that. He and the inventor, Alfred Morris, had embodied in solid metal the most revolutionary discovery that had ever been made in connection with engines. "They had compelled nature to yield them one of the most perilous of her secrets. They had drawn the teeth of danger from it, harnessed it, and set it to work. It was as gentle as a zephyr in the month of June, as powerful as a thunderbolt."

The reader is tempted to lay aside the book here, and wish he had thought of the invention first, but the author has wisely introduced the love interest with intimations of a conspiracy which has been concocted by a great firm of motor manufacturers to steal and exploit the new engine.

"Klissy," the heroine, the modern, boyish, athletic type so popular with novel writers, is suspected of being in league with the company, and it looks as if the great invention had gone to pot. But the snarl is unwound, through the agency of "Klissy," of course, and the book concludes with a description of how Longstreet won the "Vanderbilt"—which is much more exciting than seeing the race itself.

Judging from "Winding Paths," published by D. Appleton & Co., its author, Gertrude Page, is a suffragette and an ardent feminist. Her two heroines—two, mark you—are Lorraine Vivian and Hal Pritchard, the former an actress and the latter a newspaper woman. Miss Page evidently knows more about journalism than the stage, for Lorraine is a shadowy figure throughout, while Hal is a bold, breezy, clear-cut characterization.

But in spite of her modern heroines she has fallen back on the same old masculine type for a hero which has been used since early Victorian days. He belongs to the period of hoopskirts and black-walnut furniture.

A contrast to him is presented, however, in an unscrupulous cabinet minister, who is really interesting, and with whom Hal has an absorbing if disastrous love affair.

The book is extremely well written, and shows many interesting phases of London life and society.



Important New Books.

"Old Reliable," Harris Dickson, Bobbs-Merrill Co.

"Thorpe's Way," Morley Roberts, Century Co.

"Jim," J. J. Bell, George H. Doran Co.

"The Carpet of Bagdad," Harold MacGrath, Bobbs-Merrill Co.

"The Good Old Days," Charles W. Bell, A. C. McClurg & Co.

"Rolf in the Woods," Ernest Thompson Seton, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"The Flying Girl," Edith Van Dyne, Reilly & Bretton.

"John Verney," Horace A. Vachell, George H. Doran Co.

"My Life," Richard Wagner, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"Her Husband's Country," Sybil Spottiswoods, Duffield & Co.

"Parting Friends," William Dean Howells, Harper & Bros.

"The Other Man," Edgar Wallace, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Voyage of the *Why Not*," Jean Charcot, George H. Doran Co.

"Anna Malcen," G. Hugh Brennan, Mitchell Kennerley.

"A Big Horse to Ride," Elizabeth B. Driving, Macmillan Co.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

CHARLES A. DANA built up a great newspaper on the principle that to New York readers a dog fight on Fifth Avenue is of more interest than a war in Europe. Call it provincial, if you will, but it is the things nearest home, the things with which we are most familiar, that effect us most keenly. A birth, a marriage, or a death in our own family is of far greater importance to us than a like event in some other family.

We believe that this principle to some extent accounts for the success of this magazine. AINSLEE'S is an American fiction monthly designed for cultured American readers—the sort of people one meets in Margaretta Tuttle's stories. We believe that such readers take the greatest interest, derive the most entertainment from stories that, other things being equal, possess the strongest American interest. A glance at a few of the features in the October table of contents will illustrate our idea.

THE SUNSHINE WIDOW" is an attractive young American girl who, with her missing husband's partner, holds down a Western mining claim until—well, until Izola Forrester has made many interesting things happen in this charming little novel. It will be printed complete in the next number of AINSLEE'S.

The second of Margaretta Tuttle's new series, "The Way of Persuasion," is set in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. This almost brilliant piece of writing is delightful evidence that a love story in a magazine can be much more than a "magazine love story." "The Way of Persuasion" is strong with the strength of fine workmanship, a strength that is all too rare in these days of the "eat-'em-alive-in-the-frozen-North" school of fiction.

THE third of Nalbro Bartley's stirring tales of army life in the Philippines, "The Broken Barrier," presents with dra-

matic power the problem arising from an American's love for a native woman. No writer has given readers of English more vivid, more convincing pictures of the romance and tragedy characteristic of "our possessions in the far East" that lie west of us.

YOU have probably read "The Great Argentina Bubble" in this number. That the spirit of adventure is not confined to Hepzibah's young husband is made plain in James Oliver Curwood's next story, "Hepzibah Starts a Revolution."

Frank Condon's October contribution to the joy of living is called "Back to Nature." It has become the fashion whenever any young writer shows symptoms of humor to herald him as "the logical successor to O. Henry." Mr. Condon's work is not imitative; his method of handling his plots is not that of the American short-story master; his viewpoint in many cases is different. Yet there is often that in his stories which prompts us to think of him as the "illogical successor to O. Henry."

IN the May number of this year we published "St. Anthony's Vision," by Thomas Addison. It was Mr. Addison's first story. Its success was immediate. Letters of praise came in from all parts of the country, and the author received a dozen or more offers for the dramatic rights. One of these was accepted, and the story has been turned into a playlet entitled "The Girl Who Dropped In," for a prominent member of the New Theater Company.

In view of this, Mr. Addison's second story, "Taking Hostages from Caesar," in October AINSLEE'S, will be of special interest. Although entirely different in style, being dramatic rather than suitable for dramatization, it will, we feel, attract almost as much attention as did the earlier contribution.

H. F. PREVOST-BATTERSBY?

We take this very pleasant way of answering a number of inquiring and gently complaining letters: H. F. Prevost-Battersby contributes a short novelette to the October AINSLEE's called "Passing the Love of Women." It is one of the most powerful and remarkable stories that this distinguished writer has yet given us. We wish that we could reply as satisfactorily to all letters.

The balance of the fiction in the October number will be drawn from stories by Alice MacGowan, Malcolm Wheelock Strong, Rina Ramsay, whose latest book, "The Way of a Woman," is having such a wide success, E. M. Jameson, Anna Alice Chapin, L. J. Beeston, Berton Braley, Elliott Flower, and Samuel Gordon.

NOT only will the October AINSLEE's contain exceptionally good stories, but, what is of just as great importance, it will be an exceptionally well-balanced number. By "balance" we mean the relation that the contributions bear to each other in subject, length, and style. Some of you may wonder at the stress we put upon this matter of "balance." If all the stories in a magazine are good, you say, then the magazine is good. But is it? If a man were to buy the best make of each part of an automobile and attempt to assemble them would the result necessarily be a successful car? Or, better yet, take the dictionary as an illustration. It contains every word ever used by Robert Louis Stevenson, and many others just as good. It is Stevenson's masterly arrangement of these words with respect to the relation they bear to each other that makes "Treasure Island" infinitely more entertaining to most of us than is even the best of dictionaries. And, as it is with the individual words, so it is in a less evident way with the stories composed of these words. The stories, too, must be selected and arranged with respect to each other if the magazine as a whole is to be entertaining. This is what we mean by "balance." This is why we take such real satisfaction in being able to say that we consider the October number of AINSLEE's an unusually "well-balanced" one.

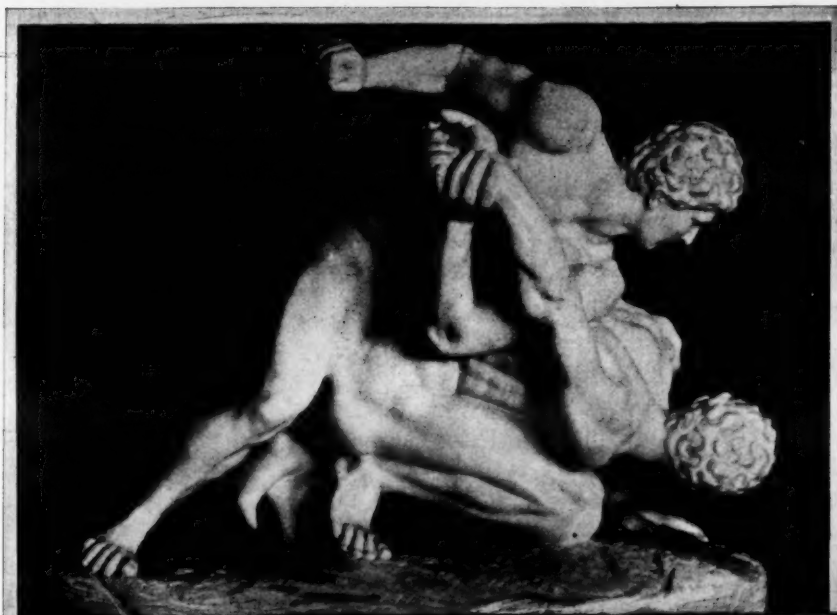
The very narrowness of AINSLEE's field

makes its field broader than that of most magazines. In confining itself to the very best fiction obtainable it attracts a class of readers capable of appreciating all fiction that is good fiction. "Over our readers' heads" is the reluctant objection often raised by some editors. AINSLEE's only barrier is: "Under our readers' feet."

THE fact that nearly a quarter of a million men and women, uninfluenced by club offers, premiums, or reduced subscription rates, are buying AINSLEE's each month leads us to believe that we are making very few mistakes. When we do make them—and editors are human, authors to the contrary—write to us, telling us so.

When the "uplift" magazines become indignant over the heartlessness of the railroads in charging the same rate for carrying needy ninety-five-pound widows that they do for carrying two hundred and thirty-five pound plutocrats, they urge, "Write to your congressman about it." Well, when anything goes amiss in *our* little world, write to *your* congressman. For AINSLEE's is the elected representative of all its readers. Elections are held on the fifteenth of each month. The suffrage is extended to women as well as men. The poll tax is fifteen cents. The polling places are the news stands. And if, when you have voted at this coming election, you have any fault to find with the administration, don't fail to write to your congressman about it!

LAST month at the conclusion of this talk we printed an offer of twenty-five dollars for the best letter telling why you like AINSLEE's, what position with reference to other periodicals it occupies in your home, and incidentally who of your family read it. Letters are limited to two hundred words and should be sent to "AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York," before October first. As we said before, we trust that no one will interpret this offer as an attempt to measure in money the value of your letters. The friendly little notes of encouragement and criticism that we receive from our readers are invaluable.



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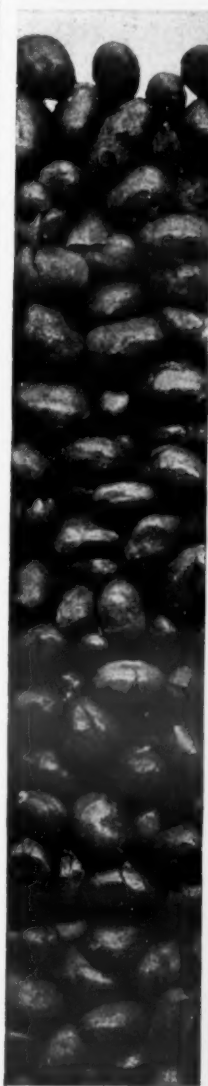
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Which Do You Serve, Madam?



Van Camp's

These are actual photographs.
The one on the right is a vertical section from a dish of home-baked beans. The other from a can of Van Camp's.

In the home dish the top beans are crisped by the dry heat and ruined. The layer below isn't even half-baked. It hardly gets more than 100 degrees.

The rest of the beans, which boil during the baking, are merely a mushy mass.

These are the beans that ferment and form gas—the beans you call heavy food. They are hard to digest—some cannot digest—because they don't get even half enough heat.

Van Camp's beans are nut-like, mealy and whole. None are crisped, none broken. They are baked five times as well as the home beans. They are baked for hours at 245 degrees. But the baking is done in steam ovens.

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One costs you sixteen hours of soaking, boiling and baking. The other is served in a minute.

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MONKS WIN RIGHT TO CHARTREUSE

**United States Supreme Court Favors
Carthusian Order in Fight to Pro-
tect Secret of Its Liqueur.**

By a decision of the United States Supreme Court the Carthusian monks, who make the celebrated liqueur known as Chartreuse, have won their fight against the Cusenier Company, a New York corporation, to prevent the latter from using the trade-mark and other indicia of the monks' product in the sale of a similar cordial in this country. The Cusenier Company acts as agent for the French liquidator, Mons. Henri Lecontier, appointed by the French court to take possession of the property of the monks in France under the Associations act of 1901.

Following the forcible removal from their monastery, near Voiron, in the Department of Isere, in France, the monks took their liqueur manufacturing secret with them and set up a factory in Tarragona, in Spain, and there have continued to manufacture the cordial, importing from France such herbs as were needed for the purpose.

The French liquidator, it is alleged, undertook to make a cordial identical with or closely resembling the monks' product.

In about all substantial details the claims of the monks have been upheld, except that the defendant company has not been held in contempt. Justice Hughes wrote the decision. The jurisdiction of the Circuit Court was upheld. It was also set forth that the monks' non-use of the trade-mark did not constitute abandonment and that the French law affecting it could not have any extra-territorial effect as far as this country was concerned, and that the monks have an exclusive right to the use of the word Chartreuse in the sale of their product in the United States.—*New York Herald*, June 20, 1911.



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One of his pictures of the heroine is here reproduced.

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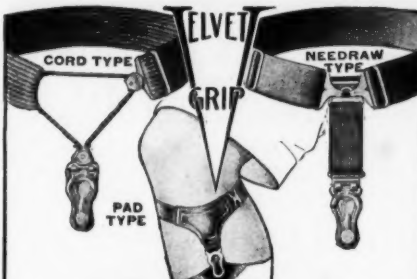
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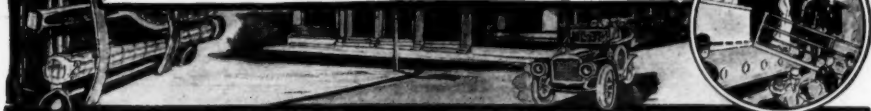
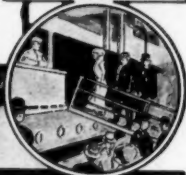
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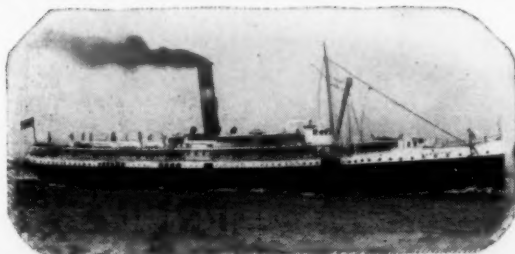
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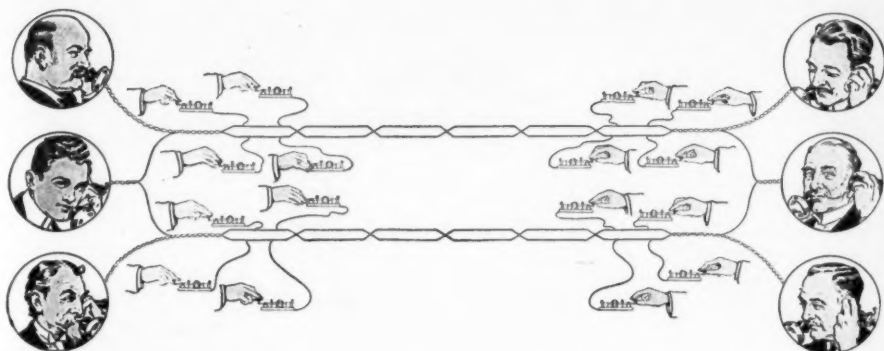
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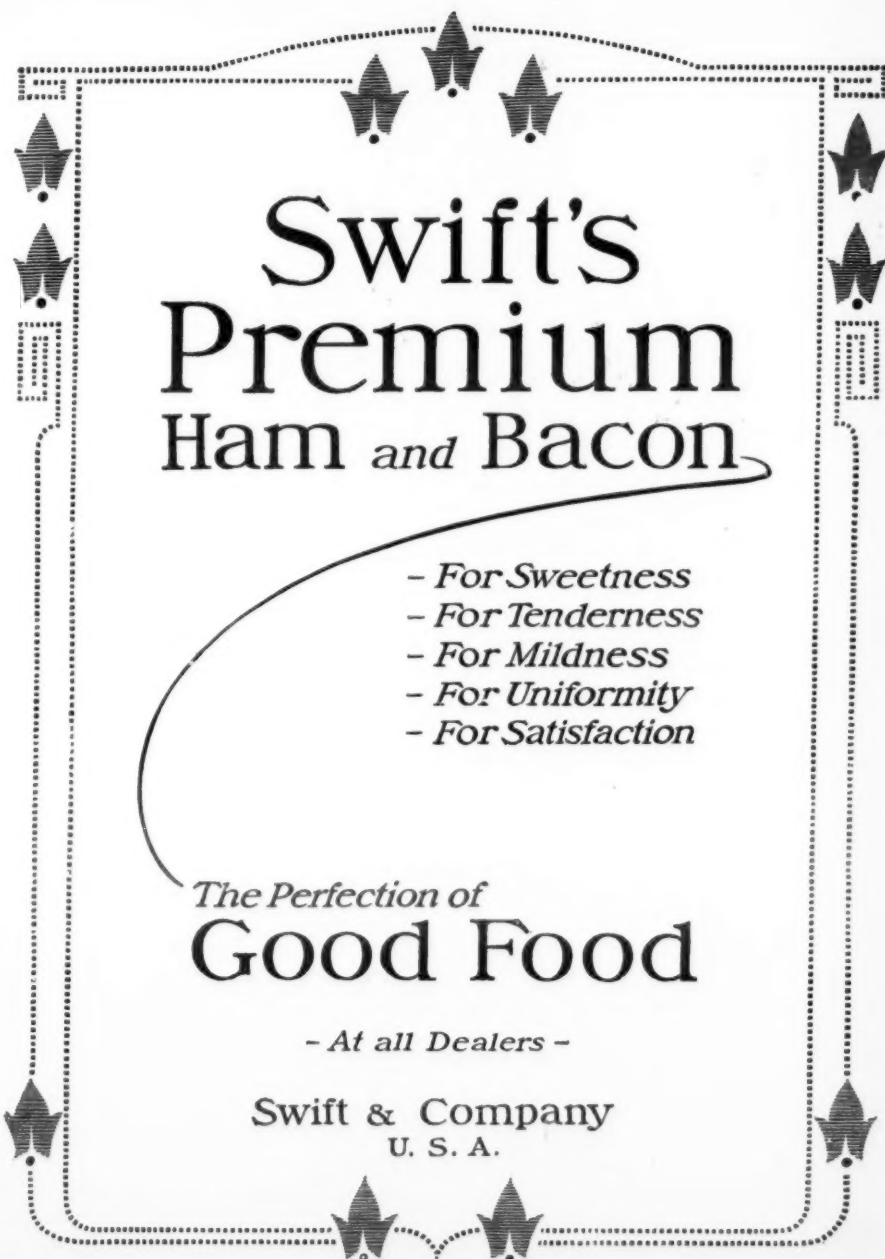
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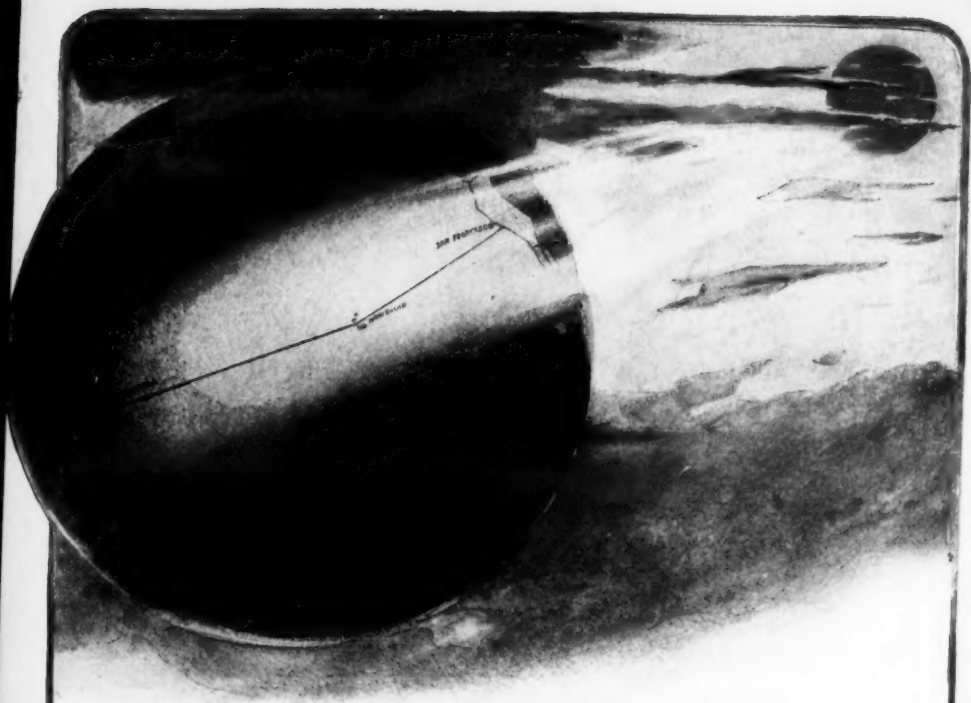
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